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PROVERBS

PROVERBS AND THEIR LESSONS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

LECTURES DELIVERED TO YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETIES.

B 647

BY

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ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

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PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Lectures here published were never delivered as a complete course, but only one here and two there, as little by little the materials grew under my hands; yet so that very much the larger part of what is contained in this volume has been at one time or another actually delivered. I publish them, because none of the works on Proverbs which I know is exactly that book for all readers which I could have wished to see. Either they include matter which cannot be fitly placed before all—or they address themselves to the scholar alone, or if not so, are at any rate inaccessible to the mere English reader—or they contain bare lists of proverbs, with no endeavour to compare, illustrate, and explain them—or if they seek to explain, yet they do it without attempting to sound the depths, or

measure the real significance, of that they undertake to unfold. From these or other causes it has come to pass, that with a multitude of books, many of them admirable, on a subject so popular, there is no single one which is frequent in the hands of men. I will not deny that, with all the slightness and shortcomings of my own, I have still hoped to supply, at least for the present, this deficiency.

ITCHENSTOKE: *December* 13, 1857.

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PROVERBS; AND THEIR LESSONS.

LECTURE I.

THE FORM AND DEFINITION OF A PROVERB.

PROVERBS, it is very likely, have never attracted from some of us the notice they deserve; and it will perhaps follow from this that, when invited to bestow even a brief attention on them, we are in doubt whether they will repay our pains. We think of them but as sayings on the lips of the multitude; not a few of them have been familiar to us as far back as we can remember; they have been often employed by ourselves, or in our hearing, on slight and trivial occasions: and thus, while one or another may have taken our fancy, we yet have remained blind in the main to the wit, wisdom, and imagination, of which they are full; and very little aware of the amusement, instruction, insight into matters the most important, which they are capable of yielding. Unless too we have devoted a certain attention to the subject,

we shall be utterly unconscious how little those more familiar ones, which are frequent on the lips of men, exhaust the treasure of our native proverbs; how many and what excellent ones remain behind, having now for the most part fallen out of use and of sight; or what riches in like kind other nations possess. We shall not so much as suspect the many aspects of interest in which our own by themselves, and our own compared with those of other nations, may be regarded.

And yet there is much to induce us to reconsider our judgment, should we be thus tempted to slight them, and to count them not merely trite, but trivial and unworthy of a serious attention. The fact that they please the people, and have pleased them for ages,—that they possess so vigorous a principle of life, as to have maintained, many of them, their ground, ever new and ever young, through all the centuries of a nation's existence,—nay, that proverbs not a few have pleased not one nation only, but many, so that they have made themselves a home in lands the most different,—and further, that they have, not a few of them, come down to us from remotest antiquity, borne safely upon the waters of that great stream of time, which has swallowed so much beneath its waves,—all this, I think, may well make us

pause, should we be disposed to turn away from them with anything of indifference or disdain.

And then further, there is this to be considered, that some of the greatest poets, the profoundest philosophers, the most learned scholars, the most genial writers in every kind, have delighted in them, have made large and frequent use of them, have bestowed infinite labour on the gathering and elucidating of them. In a fastidious age, indeed, and one of false refinement, they may go nearly or quite out of use among the so-called upper classes. No gentleman, says Lord Chesterfield, or 'no man of fashion,' as I think is his exact phrase, 'ever uses a proverb.'[1] And with how fine a touch of nature Shakespeare makes Coriolanus, the man who, with all his greatness, is entirely devoid of all sympathy for the people, to utter his scorn *of them* in scorn of their proverbs, and of their frequent employment of these:

> 'Hang 'em!
> They said they were an hungry, sighed forth proverbs;—
> That, *hunger broke stone walls*; that, *dogs must eat*;
> That, *meat was made for mouths*; that, *the gods sent not*
> *Corn for the rich men only*;—with these shreds
> They vented their complainings.'[2]

[1] A similar contempt of them speaks out in the antithesis of the French Jesuit, Bouhours: Les proverbes sont les sentences du peuple, et les sentences sont les proverbes des honnêtes gens.

[2] *Coriolanus*, Act I. Sc. 1.

But that they have been always dear to the true intellectual aristocracy of a nation, there is abundant evidence to prove. Take but these three names in evidence, which though few, are in themselves a host. Aristotle made a collection of proverbs; nor did he count that he was herein doing aught unworthy of his high reputation, however some of his adversaries may afterwards have made of this fact an imputation against him. He is said to have been the first collector of them, though many afterwards followed in the same path. Shakespeare loves them so well, that besides often citing them, and scattering innumerable covert allusions, rapid side glances at them, which we are in much danger of missing unless at home in the proverbs of England, several of his plays, as *Measure for Measure, All's well that ends well,* have popular proverbs for their titles. And Cervantes, a name only inferior to Shakespeare, has made very plain the affection with which he regarded them. Every reader of *Don Quixote* will remember his squire, who can hardly open his mouth but there drop from it almost as many proverbs as phrases. I might name others who have held the proverb in honour—men who though they may not attain to these first three, are yet deservedly accounted great; as Plautus, the most genial of Latin poets,

Rabelais and Montaigne, the two most original of French authors. How often too Fuller, whom Coleridge has styled the wittiest of writers, justifies this praise in his witty employment of some old proverb: and no reader can thoroughly understand and enjoy *Hudibras*, none but will miss a multitude of its keenest allusions, who is not thoroughly familiar with the proverbial literature of England.

Nor is this all; we may with reverence adduce quite another name than any of these, the Lord Himself, as condescending to employ such proverbs as He found current among his people. Thus, on the occasion of his first open appearance in the synagogue of Nazareth, He refers to the proverb, *Physician, heal thyself* (Luke iv. 23), as one which his hearers will perhaps bring forward against Himself; and again presently to another, *A prophet is not without honour but in his own country*, as attested in his own history; and at the well of Sychar He declares, 'Herein is that saying,' or that proverb, 'true, *One soweth and another reapeth*' (John iv. 37). But He is much more than an employer of other men's proverbs; He is a maker of his own. As all forms of human composition find their archetypes and their highest realization in Scripture, as there is no tragedy like Job, no pastoral like Ruth, no lyric

melodies like the Psalms, so we should affirm no proverbs like those of Solomon, were it not that 'a greater than Solomon' has drawn out of the rich treasure-house of the Eternal Wisdom a series of proverbs more costly still. For indeed how much of our Lord's teaching, especially as recorded in the three earlier Evangelists, is thrown into this form; and how many of his words have in this shape passed over as 'faithful sayings' to live upon the lips of men; and so doing, have fulfilled a necessary condition of the proverb, whereof there will be presently occasion to speak.

But not urging this testimony any further,—a testimony too august to be lightly used, or employed merely to swell the testimonies of men—least of all of men of such 'uncircumcised lips' as, with all their genius, were more than one of those just named,—and appealing only to the latter, I shall be justified in affirming that whether we listen to those single voices which make a silence for themselves, and are heard through the centuries and the ages, or to that great universal voice of humanity, which is wiser even than these (for it is these, with all else which is worthy to be heard added to them), there is here a subject, which men whose examples should go far, whose judgments must weigh much with us, have counted worthy of their most serious regard.

And certainly if only we acquaint ourselves with them a little, we shall be ready to set our own seal to the conclusions of wiser men that have preceded us here. For, indeed, what a body of popular good sense and good feeling is contained in the better, which is also the more numerous, class of proverbs. What a sense of natural equity, what a spirit of kindness breathes out from many of them; what prudent rules for the management of life, what shrewd wisdom, which though not *of* this world, is most truly *for* it; what frugality, what patience, what perseverance, what manly independence, are continually inculcated by them. How fine a knowledge of the human heart do many of them display; what useful, and not always obvious, hints do they offer on many most important points, as on the choice of companions, the bringing up of children, the bearing of prosperity and adversity, the restraint of immoderate desires. And they take a yet higher range than this; they have their ethics, their theology; they contemplate man in his highest relations of all, as man with his fellow man, and man with his Maker. Let their utterances on these points be correct or not, and I am very far from affirming that they are always correct, the student of humanity, he who being a man, counts nothing human to

be alien to him, can never, without wilfully foregoing an important document, and one which would have helped him often in his studies, altogether neglect or pass them by.

But what, it may be asked before we proceed further, is a proverb? Few things are harder than a definition. While on the one hand there is generally no easier task than to detect a fault or flaw in the definitions of those who have gone before us, nothing on the other is more difficult than to propose one of our own, which shall not also present a vulnerable side. Some one has said that these three things go to the constituting of a proverb, *shortness*, *sense*, and *salt*. In brief pointed sayings like this, the second of the qualities enumerated here, namely *sense*, is sometimes sacrificed to alliteration. I would not affirm that it is so here: for the words are not ill spoken, though they are very far from satisfying the rigorous requirements of a definition, as will be seen when we consider what the writer intended by his three *esses*, which it is not hard to understand. The proverb, he says, must have *shortness*; it must be succinct, utterable in a breath. It must have *sense*, not being, that is, the mere small talk of conversation, slight and trivial, which deserves to perish, and which

does perish as soon as born, no one taking the trouble to keep it alive. It must have *salt*, that is, besides its good sense, it must have point and pungency, and, so to say, a barb which shall not suffer it to drop lightly from the memory.[1] Yet, regarded as a definition, this of the triple *s* fails; it indeed errs both in defect and excess.

Thus in demanding *shortness*, it errs in excess. It is indeed quite certain that a good proverb will be short, as short, that is, as is compatible with the full and forcible conveying of that which it intends. Brevity, 'the soul of wit,' will be eminently the soul of a proverb's wit; it will contain, according to Fuller's definition, 'much matter decocted into few words.' Oftentimes it will consist of two, three, or four, and these sometimes monosyllabic, words. Thus *Extremes meet*;—*Right wrongs no man*;—*Forewarned, forearmed*;—with a thousand more.[2] But still shortness is only

[1] Compare with this Martial's happy epigram upon epigrams, in which everything runs exactly parallel to that which has been said above:

'Omne epigramma sit instar apis; sit aculeus illi,
Sint sua mella, sit et corporis exigui;'

which may be indifferently rendered thus:

'Three things must epigrams, like bees, have all—
Its sting, its honey, and its body small.'

[2] The shortest proverb which I know in the world is this

a relative term, and it would be more accurate to say that a proverb must be *concise*, cut down, that is, to the fewest possible words; condensed, quintessential wisdom.[1] But that, if only it fulfil this condition of being as short as possible, it need not be absolutely very short, there are sufficient examples to prove. Thus Freytag has admitted the following, which indeed hovers on the confines of the fable, into his great collection of Arabic proverbs: *They said to the camel-bird*, [i. e., the ostrich,] '*Carry*:' *it answered*, '*I cannot, for I am bird.*' *They said*, '*Fly*;' *it answered*, '*I cannot, for I am a camel.*' This could not be shorter, yet, as compared with the greater number of proverbs, is not short.[2] Even so the *sense* and the *salt*,

German: Voll, toll; which sets out very well the connection between fulness and folly, pride and abundance of bread. In that seeking of extreme brevity noted above, they sometimes become exceedingly elliptical (although this is the case more with the ancient than with the modern,) so much so as to omit even the vital element of the sentence, the verb. Thus: Χρήματ' ἀνήρ;—Sus Minervam;—Fures clamorem;—Meretrix pudicam;—Amantes amentes.

[1] This is what Aristotle means when he ascribes συντομία—which in another place he opposes to the ὄγκος λέξεως—to it.

[2] Let serve for further proof this eminently witty old German proverb, which, despite its apparent length, has not forfeited its character as such. I shall prefer to leave it in the original: Man spricht, an viererlei Leuten ist Mangel auf Erden: an Pfaffen, sonst dürfte einer nit 6 bis 7 Pfruenden; an Adelichen,

which are ascribed to the proverb as other necessary conditions, can hardly be said to be such; seeing that flat, saltless proverbs, though comparatively rare, there certainly are in abundance; while yet, be it remembered, we are not considering now what are the ornaments of a *good* proverb, but the essential marks of all.

And then moreover it errs in defect; for it has plainly omitted one quality of the proverb, and that the most essential of all, and indeed almost the only essential—I mean *popularity*, acceptance and adoption on the part of the people. Without this popularity, without these suffrages and this consent of the many, no saying, however brief, however wise, however seasoned with salt, however worthy on all these accounts to have become a proverb, however fulfilling all other its conditions, can yet be esteemed as such. This popularity, omitted in that enumeration of the essential notes of the proverb, is yet the only one whose presence is absolutely necessary, whose absence is fatal to the claims of any saying to be regarded as such.

Those, however, who have occupied themselves with the making of collections of proverbs

sonst wollte nit jeder Bauer ein Junker sein; an Huren, sonst würden die Handwerk Eheweiber und Nunnen nit treiben; an Juden, sonst würden Christen nit wuchern.

have sometimes failed to realize this to themselves with sufficient clearness, or at any rate have not kept it always before them. It has thus come to pass, that many collections include whatever brief sayings their gatherers have anywhere met with, which to them have appeared keenly, or wisely, or wittily spoken;[1] while yet a multitude of these have never received their adoption into the great family of proverbs, or their rights of citizenship therein: and inasmuch as they have never passed into general recognition and currency, have no claim to this title, however just a claim they may have on other grounds to our admiration and honour. For instance, this word of Goethe's, 'A man need not be an architect to live in a house,' seems to me to have every essential of a proverb, saving only that it has not passed over upon the lips of men. It is a saying of

[1] When Erasmus, after discussing and rejecting the definitions of those who had gone before him, himself defines the proverb thus, Celebre dictum, scitâ quâpiam novitate insigne, it appears to me that he has not escaped the fault which he has blamed in others—that, namely, of confounding the accidental adjuncts of a *good* proverb with the necessary conditions of *every* proverb. In rigour the whole second clause of the definition should be dismissed, and *Celebre dictum* alone remain. Better Eifelein (*Sprichwörter des Deutschen Volkes*, Friburg, 1840, p. x.): Das Sprichwort ist ein mit öffentlichem Gepräge ausgemünzter Saz, der seinen Curs und anerkannten Werth unter dem Volke hat.

manifold application; an universal law is knit up in a particular example; I mean that gracious law in the distribution of blessing, which does not limit our use and enjoyment of things by our understanding of them, but continually makes the enjoyment much wider than the knowledge; so that it is not required that one be a botanist to have pleasure in a rose, nor a critic to delight in *Paradise Lost*, nor a theologian to taste all the blessings of Christian faith, nor, as Goethe here expresses it, an architect to live in a house. And here is an inimitable saying of Schiller's: 'Heaven and earth fight in vain against a dunce;' yet it is not a proverb, because his alone; although abundantly worthy to become such;[1] moving as it does in the same line with, though far superior to, the Chinese proverb, which itself also is good: *One never so much needs his wit, as when he argues with a fool.*

Or take another example still more to the point. James Howell, a prolific English writer of the earlier half of the seventeenth century, and one who merited better than that entire oblivion into which his writings have fallen, occupied himself much with proverbs; and

[1] It suggests, however, the admirable Spanish proverb, spoken no doubt out of the same conviction; Dios me dè contienda con quien me entienda.

besides collecting those of others, he has himself set down 'five hundred new sayings, which in tract of time may serve for proverbs to posterity.' As might be expected, they have not so done; for it is not after this artificial method that such are born; yet many of these proverbs in expectation are expressed with sense and felicity; for example: 'Pride is a flower that grows in the devil's garden.' So too the selfishness which characterizes too many proverbs is not ill reproduced in the following: 'Burn not thy fingers to snuff another man's candle;' and there is at any rate good theology in the following: 'Faith is a great lady, and good works are her attendants;' and in this: 'The poor are God's receivers, and the angels are his auditors.' Yet for all this, it would be inaccurate to quote these as proverbs (and their author himself, as we have seen, did not do more than set them out as proverbs upon trial), inasmuch as they have remained the private property of him who first devised them, never having passed into general circulation; which until men's sayings have done, maxims, sentences, apophthegms, aphorisms they may be, and these of excellent temper and proof, but proverbs as yet they are not.

It is because of this, the popularity inherent in a genuine proverb, that from such in a

certain sense there is no appeal. You will not suppose me to intend that there is no appeal from its wisdom, truth, or justice; from *any* word of man's there may be such; but no appeal from it, as most truly representing a popular conviction. Aristotle, who in his ethical and political writings often finds very much more than this in a proverb, always finds this. It may not be, it very often will not be, an universal conviction which it expresses, but ever one popular and widespread. So far indeed from an universal, very often over against the one proverb there will be another, its direct antagonist; and the one shall belong to the kingdom of light, the other to the kingdom of darkness. *Common fame is seldom to blame;* here is the baser proverb, for as many as drink in with greedy ears all reports to the injury of their neighbours; being determined from the first that they *shall* be true. But it is not left without its compensation: '*They say so,' is half a liar;* here is the better word with which *they* may arm themselves, who count it a primal duty to close their ears against all such unauthenticated rumours to the discredit of their neighbours. *The noblest vengeance is to forgive;* here is the godlike proverb on the manner in which wrongs should be recompensed: *He who*

[1] Chi non può fare sua vendetta è debile, chi non vuole è vile.

cannot revenge himself is weak, he who will not is vile,[1] here is the devilish. In a sonnet which Howell has prefixed to his collection of proverbs these lines occur:

'The people's voice the voice of God we call;
And what are proverbs but the people's voice?
Coined first, and current made by common choice?
Then sure they must have weight and truth withal.'

It will follow from what has just been said, that, however true in the main, this statement cannot be taken without important qualifications and exceptions.[1]

Herein the force of a proverb mainly consists, namely, that it has already received the stamp of popular allowance. A man might produce (for what another has done he might do again), something as witty, as forcible, as much to the point, of his own; which should be hammered at the instant on his own anvil. Yet still it is not 'the wisdom of many;' it has not stood the test of experience; it wants that which the other already has, but which it only after a long period can acquire—the consenting voice of many and at different times to its wisdom

[1] Quintilian's words (*Inst.* 5. 11. 41), which are to the same effect, must be taken with the same exception; Neque enim durâssent hæc in æternum, nisi vera omnibus viderentur; and also Don Quixote's: Paréceme me, Sancho, que no ay refrán que no sea verdadéro, porque todas son sentencias sacadas de la misma experiencia, madre de las ciencias todas.

and truth. A man employing a 'proverb of the ancients' (1 Sam. xxiv. 13), one of these 'short sentences drawn from long experience,' as Cervantes calls them, is not speaking of his own, but uttering a faith and conviction very far wider than that of himself or of any single man; and it is because he is so doing that they, in Lord Bacon's words, 'serve not only for ornament and delight, but also for active and civil use; as being the edge tools of speech which cut and penetrate the knots of business and affairs.' The proverb has in fact the same advantage over the saying now produced for the first time, which for present currency and value has the recognized coin of the realm over the rude unstamped ore newly washed from the stream, or dug up from the mine. This last *may* possess an equal amount of fineness; but the other has been stamped long ago, has already passed often from man to man, and found free acceptance with all:[1] it inspires therefore a confidence which the metal unstamped and unattested cannot at present challenge. And the same satisfaction which the educated man finds in referring the particular matter before him to the universal law

[1] Thus in a proverb about proverbs, the Italians say, with a true insight into this its prerogative: Il proverbio *s'invecchia*, e chi vuol far bene, vi si specchia.

which rules it, a plainer man finds in the appeal to a proverb. He is doing the same thing; taking refuge, that is, as each man so gladly does, from his mere self and single fallible judgment, in a larger experience and in a wider conviction.

And in all this which has been urged lies, as it seems to me, the explanation of a sentence of an ancient grammarian, which at first sight appears to contain a bald absurdity, namely, that a proverb is 'a saying without an author.' For, however without a *known* author it may, and in the majority of cases it must be, still, as we no more believe in the spontaneous generation of proverbs than of anything else, an author every one of them must have had. It might, however, and it often will have been, that in its utterance the author did but *precipitate* the floating convictions of the society round him; he did but clothe in happier form what others had already felt, or even already uttered; for a proverb has oftentimes been in this aspect 'the wit of one, and the wisdom of many.' And further, its constitutive element, as we must all now perceive, is not its utterance on the part of the one, but its acceptance on the part of the many. It is *their* sanction which first raises it to the dignity of such; so that every one who took or gave it during the

period when it was struggling into recognition may claim to have had a share in its production; and in this sense without any single author it may have been. From the very first the people will have vindicated it for their own. And thus though they do not always analyze the compliment paid to them in the use of their proverbs, they always feel it; they feel that a writer or speaker using these is putting himself on their ground, is entering on their region, and they welcome him the more cordially for this.[1]

Let us now consider if some other have not sometimes been proposed as essential notes of the proverb, which yet are in fact accidents, such as may be present or may be absent without affecting it vitally. Into an error of this kind they have fallen, who claim for the proverb, and make one of its necessary conditions, that it should be a figurative expression. But how many excellent proverbs, such as *Haste makes waste*;—*Honesty is the best policy*,

[1] The name which the proverb bears in Spanish points to this fact, that popularity is a necessary condition of it. This name is not *proverbio*, for that in Spanish signifies an apophthegm, an aphorism, a maxim; but *refran*, which is *a referendo*, from the frequency of its repetition; yet see Diez, *Etymol. Wörterbuch*, p. 284. The etymology of the Greek παροιμία is somewhat doubtful, but it too means probably a *trite*, *wayside* saying.

with ten thousand more, have nothing figurative about them. Here again the error has arisen from taking that which is the ornament of many, and those oftentimes the best and choicest, and transferring it, as a necessary condition, to all. This much of truth there is here, namely, that the employment of the concrete instead of the abstract is one of the most frequent means by which the proverb obtains and keeps its popularity; making in this way an appeal not to the intellectual faculties alone, but to the feelings, to the fancy, or even to the imagination, as well, and stirring the whole man to pleasurable activity.

By the help of an example or two we can best realize to ourselves how immense an advantage it thus obtains for itself. Thus if one contented himself with saying, 'He may wait till he is a beggar, who waits to be rich by other men's deaths,' would this trite morality go half so far, or be remembered half so long, as the vigorous image of this proverb: *He who waits for dead men's shoes may go barefoot*? [1] Or again, what is 'All men are mortal,' as compared with the proverb: *Every door may be shut but death's door*? or with this: *Death always finds some excuse*? Or let one observe:

[1] The same, under a different image, in Spanish: Larga soga tira, quien por muerte agena suspira.

'More perish by intemperance than are drowned in the sea,' is this anything better than a painful, yet at the same time a flat, truism? But put it thus: *More are drowned in the beaker than in the ocean*;[1] or thus: *More are drowned in wine and in beer than in water*:[2] (and these both are German proverbs), and it is quite a different matter. There is something that lays hold on us now. We are struck with the smallness of the beaker as set against the vastness of the ocean, while yet so many more deaths are ascribed to that than to this; and further with the fact that literally none are, and none could be, drowned in the former, while multitudes perish in the latter. In the justifying of the paradox, in the extricating of the real truth from the apparent falsehood of the statement, in the answer to the appeal and challenge made here to the imagination,—in all this there is a process of mental activity, oftentimes so rapidly exercised as scarcely to be perceptible, yet not the less carried on with a pleasurable excitement.[3]

Let me mention now some other helps which the proverb employs for obtaining free

[1] Im Becher ersaufen mehr als im Meere.

[2] In Wein und Bier ertrinken mehr denn im Wasser.

[3] Here is the explanation of the perplexity of Erasmus. Deinde fit, *nescio quo pacto*, ut sententia proverbio quasi vibrata feriat acrius auditoris animum, et aculeos quosdam cogitationum relinquat infixos.

course among men, for securing that it shall be listened to with pleasure by them, that it shall not slip again from their memories who have once heard it;—helps at the same time so separable from it, that none can be in danger of affirming them essential parts or conditions of it. Of these rhyme is perhaps the most frequently recurring. I will enter into no discussion here on the causes of the charm which rhyme possesses for us all; but that it does possess a wondrous charm, that we *like* what is *like*, is attested by a thousand facts, and not least by the rhyming form into which a multitude of proverbs, and those among the most widely current, have been thrown. Take a handful of these: *Good mind, good find*;—*Wide will wear, but tight will tear*;—*Truth may be blamed, but cannot be shamed*;—*Fury wasteth as patience lasteth*;—*Be still, and have thy will*;—*Little strokes fell great oaks*;—*Women's jars breed men's wars*;—*A king's face should give grace*;—*East, west, home is best*;—*Store is no sore*;—*Slow help is no help*;—*Who goes a-borrowing, goes a-sorrowing.* There are hundreds of the same character behind, uniting, for the most part, this of rhyme with that which I spoke of before, namely, extreme brevity and conciseness.[1]

[1] So, too, in other languages; Qui prend, se rend;—Qui se loue, s'emboue;—Chi và piano, và sano, e và lontano;—Chi

Alliteration, which is nearly allied to rhyme, is another help whereof the proverb largely avails itself. Alliteration was at one time an important element in our English versification; it almost promised to contend with rhyme itself, which should be the more important; and perhaps, if some great master in the art had arisen, might have retained a far stronger hold on English poetry than it now possesses. At present it is merely secondary and subsidiary. Yet it cannot be called altogether unimportant; no master of melody despises it; on the contrary, the mightiest, as in our days Tennyson, make

compra terra, compra guerra;—Quien se muda, Dios le ayuda; —Ehestand, wehestand;—Wie gewonnen, so zerronnen; and the Latin medieval;—Qualis vita, finis ita;—Via crucis, via lucis; —Uniti muniti. We sometimes regard rhyme as a modern invention, and to the modern world no doubt the discovery of all its capabilities, and the consequent large application of it belongs. But proverbs alone would be sufficient to show that in itself it is not modern, however restricted in old times the employment may have been. For instance, there is a Greek proverb to express that men learn by their sufferings more than by any other teaching: Παθήματα, μαθήματα (Herodotus, i. 207); one which in the Latin, Nocumenta, documenta, or, Quæ nocent, docent, finds both in rhyme and sense its equivalent. Another rhyming Greek proverb, Πλησμονή, ἐπιλησμονή, implying that fulness of blessings is too often accompanied with forgetfulness of their Author (*Deut.* viii. 11–14), is, I fancy, not ancient—at least does not date further back than Greek Christianity. The sentiment implies this, and the fact that the word ἐπιλησμονή does not occur in classical Greek would seem to be decisive upon it.

the most frequent, though not always the most obvious, use of it. In the proverb you will find it of continual recurrence, and where it falls, as, to be worth anything, it must, on the key-words of the sentence, of very high value. Thus: *Frost and fraud both end in foul*;—*Like lips, like lettuce*;—*Meat and matins minish no way*;—*Who swims in sin, shall sink in sorrow*;—*No cross, no crown*;—*Out of debt, out of danger*;—*Do on hill as you would do in hall*;[1] that is, Bear yourself in solitude as you would in a crowd. Alliterative proverbs are almost as common in other languages as in our own, but I shall not count it necessary to quote them; I will only adduce, in concluding this branch of the subject, a single Italian proverb, which in a remarkable manner unites all the three distinctive features of which we have been just treating, brevity, rhyme, and alliteration: *Traduttori, traditori*; one which we might reconstitute in English thus: *Translators, traitors*; so untrue very often are they to the genius of their original, to its spirit, if not to its letter, and frequently to both; so do they *surrender*, rather than *render*, its meaning; not *turning*, but only *overturning*, it from one language to another.[2]

[1] So in Latin: Nil sole et sale utilius; and in Greek: Σῶμα, σῆμα.

[2] This is St. Jerome's pun, who complains that the Latin

A certain pleasant exaggeration, the use of the figure hyperbole, a figure of natural rhetoric which Scripture itself does not disdain to employ, is a not unfrequent engine with the proverb to arouse attention, and to make a way for itself into the minds of men. Thus the Persians have a proverb: *A needle's eye is wide enough for two friends; the whole world is too narrow for two foes.* Again, of a man whose good luck seems never to forsake him, so that from the very things which would be another man's ruin he extricates himself not merely without harm, but with credit and with gain, the Arabs say: *Cast him into the Nile, and he will come up with a fish in his mouth*; while of such a Fortunatus as this the Germans have a proverb: *If he flung a penny on the roof, a dollar would come back to him*;[1] as, again, of the man in the opposite extreme of fortune, to whom the most unlikely calamities, and such as beforehand might seem to exclude one another, befall, they say: *He would fall on his back, and break his nose.*

In all which I have just traced out, in the fact that the proverbs of a language are so

versions of the Greek Testament current in the Church in his day were too many of them not *versiones*, but *eversiones*.

[1] Würf er einen Groschen aufs Dach, fiel ihm Ein Thaler herunter;—compare another: Wer Glück hat, dem kalbet ein Ochs.

frequently its highest bloom and flower, while yet so much of their beauty consists often in curious felicities of diction pertaining exclusively to some single language, either in a rapid conciseness to which nothing tantamount exists elsewhere, or in rhymes which it is hard to reproduce, or in alliterations which do not easily find their equivalents, or in other verbal happinesses such as these, lies the difficulty which is often felt, which I shall myself often feel in the course of these lectures, of transferring them without serious loss, nay, sometimes the impossibility of transferring them at all, from one language to another.[1] Oftentimes, to use an image of Erasmus,[2] they are like those wines, (I believe the Spanish Valdepeñas is one,) of which the true excellence can only be known by those who drink them in the land which gave them birth.

[1] Take for example this German proverb:

Stultus und *Stolz*
Wachset aus Einem Holz;

its transfer into any other languages is manifestly impossible. The same may be affirmed of another, commending stay-at-home habits to the wife: Die *Hausfrau* soll nit sein eine *Ausfrau*; or again of this beautiful Spanish one: La *verdad* es siempre *verde*.

[2] Habent enim hoc peculiare pleraque proverbia, ut in eâ linguâ sonare postulant in quâ nata sunt; quod si in alienum sermonem demigrârint, multum gratiæ decedat. Quemadmodum sunt et vina quædam quæ recusant exportari, nec germanam saporis gratiam obtineant, nisi in his locis in quibus proveniunt.

Transport them under other skies, or, which is still more fatal, empty them from vessel to vessel, and their strength and flavour will have well nigh disappeared in the process.

Not indeed that this difficulty is always felt. We feel it most when we seek deliberately, and, in a literary interest, to transfer some proverb which we admire from its native language into our own or another. Where, on the contrary, it has transferred itself, made for itself a second home, and taken root a second time in the heart and affections of a people, in such a case one has often to admire the instinctive skill with which it has found compensations for that which it has been compelled to let go, replaced one vigorous idiom by another, one happy rhyme or play on words by its equivalent; and all this while the extremely narrow limits in which it moves have left to it the very smallest liberty of selection. And thus, presenting itself equally finished and complete in two or even more languages, the internal evidence will be quite insufficient to determine which of these forms is the original, and which the copy. For example, the proverb at once German and French, which I can present in no comelier English dress than this,

Mother's truth
Keeps constant youth;

but which in German runs thus,

Mutter-treu
Wird täglich neu;

and in French,

Tendresse maternelle
Toujours se renouvelle:

appears to me as graceful and tender in the one language as in the other; while yet so much of its beauty depends on the form, that beforehand one could hardly have expected that the charm of it would survive a transfer to the second language, whichever that may be, wherein it found a home. But of a subject thus opened, I shall reserve the further development for lectures which follow.

LECTURE II.

THE GENERATION OF PROVERBS.

My first lecture was occupied with the form and definition of a proverb; let us endeavour in the present to realize to ourselves, so far as this lies in our power, the processes by which a people gets together the great body of its proverbs, the sources from which it mainly derives them, and the circumstances under which such as it makes for itself of new, had their birth and generation.

And first, I would call your attention to the fact that a vast number of its proverbs a people does not make for itself, but finds ready made to its hands, entering upon them as a part of its intellectual and moral inheritance. The world has now endured so long, and the successive generations of men have thought, felt, enjoyed, suffered, and altogether learned so much, that there is an immense stock of wisdom which may be said to belong to humanity in common, being the accumulated fruits of all this its experience in the past. Even Aristotle,

more than two thousand years ago, could speak of proverbs as 'the fragments of an elder wisdom, which, on account of their brevity and aptness, had amid a general wreck and ruin been preserved.' These, the common property of the civilized world, are the original stock with which each nation starts; these, either orally handed down to it, or made its own by those of its earlier writers who brought it into living communication with the past. Thus, and having reached us through these channels, a vast number of Greek, Latin, and medieval proverbs live on with us, and with all the modern nations of the world.

It is, indeed, oftentimes a veritable surprise to discover the venerable age and antiquity of a proverb, which we have hitherto taken for granted to be quite a later birth of modern society. Thus we may perhaps suppose that well-known saying which forbids the too critical scanning of a present, *One must not look a gift horse in the mouth*, to be of English extraction, the genuine growth of our own soil. I will not pretend to say how old it is; it is certainly older than St. Jerome, a Latin father of the fourth century; who, when some found fault with certain writings of his, replied with a tartness which he could occasionally exhibit, that they were voluntary on his part, free-will offerings,

and with this quoted the proverb, *that it did not behove to look a gift horse in the mouth*; and before it comes to us, we meet it once more in one of the rhymed Latin verses, which were such favourites in the middle ages:

Si quis det mannos, ne quære in dentibus annos.

Again, *Liars should have good memories* is a saying which probably we assume to be modern; it is very far indeed from so being. The same Jerome, who, I may observe by the way, is a constant quoter of proverbs, and who has preserved some that would not otherwise have descended to us,[1] speaks of one as 'unmindful of the *old* proverb, *Liars should have good memories*,'[2] and we find it ourselves in a Latin writer

[1] Thus is it, I believe, with Bos lassus fortius figit pedem; a proverb with which he warns the younger Augustine not to provoke a contest with him, the weary, but therefore the more formidable, antagonist.

[2] Oblitus *veteris* proverbii: mendaces memores esse oportere. Let me quote here Fuller's excellent unfolding of this proverb: 'Memory in a liar is no more than needs. For first lies are hard to be remembered, because many, whereas truth is but one: secondly, because a lie cursorily told takes little footing and settled fastness in the teller's memory, but prints itself deeper in the hearers, who take the greater notice because of the improbability and deformity thereof; and one will remember the sight of a monster longer than the sight of an handsome body. Hence comes it to pass that when the liar hath forgotten himself, his auditors put him in mind of the lie and take him therein.'

a good deal older than him.[1] So too I was certainly surprised to discover the other day that our own proverb: *Good company on a journey is worth a coach*, has come down to us from the ancient world.[2]

Having lighted just now on one of those Latin rhymed verses, let me by the way warn against an error about them, into which it would be very easy to fall. I have seen it suggested that these, if not the source *from* which, are yet the channels *by* which, very many proverbs have reached us. I doubt it exceedingly. This much we may conclude from the existence of proverbs in this shape, namely, that since these rhymed or leonine verses went altogether out of fashion at the revival of a classical taste in the fifteenth century, such proverbs as exist in this form may be affirmed with a tolerable certainty to date at least as far back as that period; but not that in all or even in a majority of cases this shape was their earliest. Oftentimes the proverb in its more popular form is so vastly superior to the same in this its Latin monkish dress, that the latter by its tameness and flatness betrays itself at once as the inadequate translation, and we cannot fail to regard the other as the genuine proverb. Many

[1] Quintilian, *Inst.* 1. 4.

[2] Comes facundus in viâ pro vehiculo est

of them are 'so essentially Teutonic, that they appear to great disadvantage in the Latin garb which has been huddled upon them.'[1] Thus, when we have on one side the English, *Hungry bellies have no ears*, and on the other the Latin,

Jejunus venter non audit verba libenter,

who can doubt that the first is the proverb, and the second only the versification of the proverb? Or who would hesitate to affirm that the old Greek proverb, *A rolling stone gathers no moss*, may very well have come to us without the intervention of the medieval Latin,

Non fit hirsutus lapis hinc atque inde volutus?

And the true state of the case comes out still more clearly, where there are *two* of these rhymed Latin equivalents for the one popular proverb, and these quite independent of each other. So it is in respect of our English proverb: *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*; which appears in this form:

Una avis in dextrâ melior quam quatuor extra;

and also in this:

Capta avis est pluris quam mille in gramine ruris.

Who can fail to see here two independent

[1] Kemble, *Salomon and Saturn*, p. 56.

attempts to render the same saying? Or when Chaucer works up into his narrative that rule of natural equity, *First come, first serve*, in the following verse:

Whoso first cometh to the mill, first grint,

who can doubt that we have here the proverb, and in the Latin line,

Ante molam primus qui venit, non molat imus,

the mere versification of the proverb? Sometimes the Latin line confesses itself to be only the rendering of a popular saying; thus is it with the following:

Ut dicunt multi, cito transit lancea stulti;

in other words, *A fool's bolt is soon shot.*

Then, besides this derivation from elder sources, from the literature of nations which as such now exist no longer, besides this process in which a people are merely receivers and borrowers, there is also at somewhat later periods in its life a mutual interchange between it and other nations growing up beside, and contemporaneously with it, of their own several inventions in this kind; a free giving and taking, in which it is often hard, and oftener impossible, to say which is the lender and which the borrower. Thus the quantity of proverbs not drawn from antiquity, but at the

same time common to all, or nearly all of the modern European languages, is very considerable. The 'solidarity' (to use a word which it is in vain to strive against), of all the nations of Christendom comes out very noticeably here.

There is indeed nothing in the study of proverbs, in the attribution of them to their right owners, in the arrangement and citation of them, which creates more perplexity than the circumstance of finding the same proverb in so many different quarters, current among so many different nations. In quoting it as of one, it often seems as if we were doing wrong to many, while yet it is sometimes almost, or oftener still altogether, impossible to determine to what nation it first belonged, so that others drew it at second hand from that one;—even granting that any form in which we now possess it is really the oldest of all. More than once this fact has occasioned a serious disappointment to the zealous collector of the proverbs of his native country. Proud of the rich treasures which in this kind it possessed, he has very reluctantly discovered on a fuller investigation of the whole subject, how many of these which he counted native, the peculiar heirloom and glory of his own land, must at once and without hesitation be resigned to

others, who can be shown beyond all doubt to have been in earlier possession of them: while in respect of many more, if his own nation can put in a claim to them as well as others, yet he is compelled to acknowledge that it can put in no better than many competitors, and oftentimes a claim not as good as theirs.[1]

This single fact, which is lifted above all doubt, that nations are thus continually borrowing proverbs from one another, is sufficient to show that, however the main body of a nation's proverbs may be, some almost as old as itself, and some far older, it would for all this be a serious mistake to regard the sum of them as a closed account, neither capable of, nor actually receiving, addition—a mistake of the same character as that sometimes made about the *words* of a language. So long as a language is living, it will be appropriating foreign words, putting forth new words of its own. Exactly in the same way, so long as a people have any vigorous energies at work in them, are acquiring any new experiences of life, are forming any new moral convictions, for these new experiences and convictions new utterances will be found; and some of the

[1] Kelly, in the preface to his very useful collection of Scotch proverbs, describes his own disappointment at making exactly such a discovery as this.

happiest of these will receive that stamp of general allowance which shall constitute them proverbs. And this fact makes it certain that the collections which exist in print will be very far from embracing the whole body of proverbs in circulation. They preserve, indeed, many others; many which have now become obsolete, and which would, but for them, have been forgotten; but there are not a few, which, living on the lips of men, have yet never found their way into books, however worthy to have done so; and this, either because the sphere in which they circulate has continued always a narrow one, or that the occasions which call them out are very rare, or that they, having only lately risen up, have not hitherto attracted the attention of any who cared to record them. It would be well, if such as take an interest in the subject, and are sufficiently well versed in the proverbial literature of their own country to recognize these unregistered proverbs when they meet them, would secure such from that perishing, which, so long as they remain merely oral, might easily overtake them; and would make them at the same time, what all *good* proverbs ought certainly to be, the common heritage of all.[1]

[1] The pages of *Notes and Queries* are always open to receive such, and in them they might be safely garnered up. That there

But it is not merely proverbs, which, though current on the lips of men, have never yet been registered that are wanting to complete our collections. There are besides them, a vast number in every European literature, certainly in our own, which are still lurking in books, in those mainly of the early and middle period of our literature, and which have never been gathered out of these. Before we could flatter ourselves that a complete collection, or one at all approaching to completeness, had been

are such proverbs to reward him who should carefully watch for them, is abundantly proved by the immense addition, which, as I shall have occasion hereafter to mention, a Spanish scholar was able to make to the collected proverbs, so numerous before, of Spain. Nor do there want other indications of the like kind. Thus, the editor of what was till very lately quite the best modern collection of German proverbs, records this one, found in no preceding collection, and by himself never heard but once, and then from the lips of an aged lay servitor of a monastery in the Black Forest: *Offend one monk, and the lappets of all cowls will flutter as far as Rome*; (Beleidigest̃u einen Münch, so knappen alle Kuttenzipfel bis nach Rom;) and yet who can doubt that we have a genuine proverb here, and one excellently expressive of the common cause which the whole of the monastic orders, despite their inner dissensions, made ever, when assailed from without, with one another? It is very easy to be deceived in such a matter, but the following, which is current in Ireland, I have never seen in print: '*The man on the dyke always hurls well*;' the looker-on at a game of hurling, seated indolently on the wall, always imagines that he could improve on the strokes of the actual players, and, if you will listen to him, would have played the game much better than they; a proverb of sufficiently wide application.

made, it would need that the whole of English literature should have been carefully and intelligently *dragged*, with the special object of drawing these from the innumerable lurking places in which at present they so effectually lie hid, that, although from time to time encountered by the rare readers of our older books, they yet form no part of any collected body of our proverbs, and are taken no account of, when we are estimating our riches in this kind. It is little likely that such a task will ever be undertaken; yet something in this way might be accomplished, if every reader of an Elizabethan drama, of a volume of Puritan divinity, of Fuller, of a hundred more, would make a note of the proverbs or proverbial phrases which they severally offered, and where these are new, be at pains that in one way or another they should enter into the common stock of our collected proverbs.[1]

And as new proverbs will be born from life and from life's experience, so too there will be

[1] Several such proverbs, of my own noting, I have used in this little volume, as for instance that very beautiful one which I never met but in the writings of Tyndal, *Be still, and have thy will.* Others might be added to these; thus, *Fury wasteth as patience lasteth.—I am black, but I am not the devil.—It is ill wool that will take no dye.* Wander in his *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexicon*, pp. xvii–xx, gives a very interesting account of what he is doing in this way to enrich, or rather to learn the extent of the riches of, the proverbial literature of Germany.

another fruitful source of their further increase, namely, the books which a people have made heartily their own. Portions of these they will continually detach, most often word for word; at other times wrought up into new shapes with that freedom which they claim to exercise in the modifying or moulding of whatever they thus appropriate to their own use. These thus detached they will give and take as part of their current intellectual money. Thus '*Evil communications corrupt good manners*,'[1] (1 Cor. xv. 33,) is word for word a metrical line from a Greek comedy. It is not very likely that St. Paul had ever read this comedy, but the words for their truth's sake had been taken up into the common speech of men; and not as a citation, but as a proverb, he uses them. And if you will, from this point of view, glance over a few pages of one of Shakespeare's more popular dramas,—Hamlet, for example,—you will be surprised, should your attention never have been called to this before, to note how much has in this manner been separated from it, to pass into the every day use and service of men; and you will be prepared to estimate higher than ever what he has done for his fellow countrymen, the 'possession for ever' which his writings have

[1] *Φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρήσθ' ὁμιλίαι κακαί.*

become for them. And much, no doubt, is passing even now from favourite authors into the flesh and blood of a nation's moral and intellectual life; and as 'household words,' as a portion of its proverbial philosophy, for ever incorporating itself therewith. We have a fair measure of an author's true popularity, I mean of the real and lasting hold which he has taken on his nation's heart, in the extent to which it has been thus done with his writings.

There is another way in which additions are from time to time made to the proverbial wealth of a people. Some event has laid strong hold of their imagination, has stirred up the depths of their moral consciousness; and all which they have then felt they have gathered up for themselves, perhaps in some striking phrase which was uttered at the moment, or it may be in some allusive words, understood by everybody, and which at once summon up the whole incident before their eyes.

Sacred history furnishes us with one example at the least of this generation of a proverb. Of that saying, '*Is Saul also among the prophets*?' we know the exact manner in which it grew to be a 'proverb in Israel.' When the son of Kish revealed of a sudden that nobler life which had hitherto been slumbering in

him, undreamt of alike by himself and by others, took his part and place among the sons of the prophets, and, borne along in their enthusiasm, praised and prophesied as they did, showing that he was indeed 'turned into another man,' then all that knew him beforehand said one to another, some probably in sincere astonishment, some in irony and unbelief, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' And the question they asked found and finds its application as often as any reveals suddenly, at some crisis of his life, qualities for which those who knew him the longest and the best had hitherto given him no credit, a nobleness which had been latent in him until now, a power of taking his place among the worthiest and the best, which none until then had at all deemed him to possess. It will, of course, find equally its application, when one does not step truly, but only affects suddenly to step, into a higher school, to take his place in a nobler circle of life than that in which hitherto he has moved.

Another proverb, and one well known to the classical scholar, *The Cranes of Ibycus*,[1] had its rise in one of those remarkable incidents, which, witnessing for God's inscrutable judgments, are eagerly grasped by men. The story of its birth is indeed one to which so deep a

[1] Αἱ Ἰβύκου γέρανοι.

moral interest is attached, that I shall not hesitate to repeat it, even with the risk before me that Schiller's immortal poem on the subject, or it may be the classical studies of some here present, may have made it already familiar to a portion of my hearers. Ibycus, a famous lyrical poet of Greece, journeying to the games at Corinth, was assailed by robbers: as he fell beneath their murderous strokes he looked round, if any witnesses or avengers were nigh. No living thing was in sight, save only a flight of cranes soaring high over head. He called on them, and to them committed the avenging of his blood. A vain commission, as it might have appeared, and as no doubt it did to the murderers appear. Yet it was not so. For these, sitting a little time after in the open theatre at Corinth, beheld this flight of cranes soaring above them, and one said scoffingly to another, 'Lo, there, the avengers of Ibycus!' The words were caught up by some near them; for already the poet's disappearance had awakened anxiety and alarm. Being questioned, they betrayed themselves, and were led to their doom; and *The Cranes of Ibycus* passed into a proverb, very much as our *Murder will out*, to express the wondrous leadings of God whereby continually the secretest things of blood are brought to the open light of day.

Gold of Toulouse[1] is another of these proverbs in which men's sense of a God verily ruling and judging the earth has found its embodiment. A Roman Consul had taken the city of Toulouse by an act of more than common perfidy and treachery; and possessed himself of the immense hoards of wealth stored in the temples of the Gaulish deities. From this day forth he was so hunted by calamity, all worst evils and disasters, all shame and dishonour, fell so thick on himself and all who were his, and were so traced up by the moral instinct of mankind to this accursed thing which he had made his own, that any wicked gains, fatal to their possessor, acquired this name of Tolosan gold; while of him, at once the sinner and the sufferer, it would be said 'He has gold of Toulouse.'

Another proverb, which in English has run into the following posy, *There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip*, descends to us from the Greeks, and has a very striking story connected with it. A master treated with extreme cruelty his slaves who were engaged in planting and otherwise laying out a vineyard for him; until at length one of them, the most misused of all, prophesied that for this his cruelty he should never drink of its wine. When the first

[1] Aurum Tolosanum; see Merivale, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, p. 63.

vintage was completed, he bade this slave to fill a goblet for him, which taking in his hand he taunted him with the failure of his prophecy. The other replied in words which have since become proverbial. As he spake, tidings were brought of a huge wild boar that was wasting the vineyard. Setting down the untasted cup, and snatching hastily a spear, the master went out to meet the wild boar, and was slain in the encounter, and thus the proverb, *Many things find place between the cup and lip*, arose.[1]

A Scotch proverb, *He that invented the Maiden, first hanselled it*, is not altogether unworthy to rank with these. It alludes to the well-known historic fact that the Regent Morton, the inventor of a new instrument of death called 'The Maiden,' a sort of anticipation of the guillotine, was himself the first upon whom the proof of it was made. Men felt, to use the language of the Latin poet, that 'no law was juster than that the artificers of death should perish by their own art,' and embodied their sense of this in the proverb.

Memorable words of illustrious men will frequently not die in the utterance, but pass from

[1] Πολλὰ μεταξὺ πέλει κύλικος καὶ χείλεος ἄκρου. In Latin, Inter calicem et os multa cadunt; In French, Entre la bouche et le verre le vin souvent tombe à terre; in Spanish, De la mano á la boca se pierde la sopa.

mouth to mouth, being still repeated with complacency, till at length they have received their adoption into the great family of national proverbs. Such were the gnomes or sayings of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, supposing them to have been indeed theirs, and not ascribed to them only after they had obtained universal currency and acceptance. So too a saying, attributed to Alexander the Great, may very well have arisen on the occasion, and under the circumstances, to which its birth is commonly ascribed. When some of his officers reported to him with something of dismay the innumerable multitudes of the Persian hosts which were advancing to assail him, the youthful Macedonian hero silenced them and their apprehensions with the reply: *One butcher does not fear many sheep*; not in this applying an old proverb, but framing a new, and one admirably embodying the confidence which he felt in the immeasurable superiority of the Hellenic over the barbarian man;—and this saying, having been once set on foot, has since lived on, and that, because the occasions were so numerous on which it would find its application.

Taking occasion from this royal proverb, I observe by the way, that it would be a great mistake to assume, though the error is not an uncommon one, that because proverbs are

popular, they have therefore originally sprung from the bosom of the populace. What was urged in my first lecture of their popularity was not at all intended in this sense; and the sound common sense, the wit, the wisdom, the right feeling, which are their *predominant* characteristics, alike contradict any such supposition. They spring rather from the sound healthy kernel of the nation, whether in high place or in low; and it is surely worthy of note, how large a proportion of those with the generation of which we are acquainted, owe their existence to the foremost men of their time, to its philosophers, its princes, and its kings; as it would not be difficult to show. And indeed the evil in proverbs testifies to this no less than the good. Thus the many proverbs in almost all modern tongues expressing scorn of the 'villain' are alone sufficient to show that for the most part they have their birth not quite in the lower regions of society, but reflect much oftener the convictions, prejudices, and passions of those higher in the social scale.

Let me adduce another example of the proverbs which have just grown out of an incident, which contain an allusion to it, and are only perfectly intelligible when the incident itself is known. It is this Spanish; *Let that which is lost be for God*; one the story of whose

birth is thus given by the leading Spanish commentator on the proverbs of his nation:—The father of a family, making his will and disposing of his goods upon his death-bed, ordained concerning a certain cow which had strayed, and had been now for a long time missing, that, if it was found, it should be for his children, if otherwise for God: and hence the proverb, *Let that which is lost be for God*, arose. The saying was not one to let die; laying bare as so wonderfully it does some of the subtlest treacheries of the human heart; for, indeed, whenever men would give to God only their lame and their blind, that which costs them nothing, that from which they hope no good, no profit, no pleasure for themselves, what are they saying in their hearts but that which this man said openly, *Let that which is lost be for God.*

This subject of the generation of proverbs, upon which I have thus touched so slightly, is one upon which whole volumes have been written.[1] Those who have occupied themselves

[1] Erasmus in the *Preface* to his *Adagia* has a few excellent words on the subject, which are well worth quoting: Quibus ex rebus accedat novitas adagiis, mox ostendemus; nunc quot in modis celebritas contingit, paucis indicabimus. Veniunt igitur in vulgi sermonem, vel ex oraculis numinum; vel a sapientium dictis, quæ quidem antiquitas oraculorum instar celebravit; vel a poëtâ quopiam maxime vetusto; vel e scenâ, hoc est tragicorum vel comicorum actis fabulis; præcipue vero comœdia mutuo quodam commercio et usurpat pleraque jactata

herein have sought to trace historically the circumstances out of which various proverbs have sprung, and to which they owe their existence; that so by the analogy of these we might realize to ourselves the rise of others whose origins lie beyond our vision, obscure and unknown. No one will deny the interest of the subject, of being enabled thus to preside at the birth of a saying which has lived on and held its ground in the world, and has not ceased, from the day it was first uttered, to be more or less of a spiritual or intellectual force among men. Still the cases in which this is possible are rare, as compared with the far larger number in which the first birth is veiled, as is almost all birth, in mystery and obscurity. And indeed it could scarcely be otherwise. The vast majority of proverbs are foundlings, the happier foundlings of a nation's wit, which the collective nation, refusing to let perish, has taken up and adopted for its own. But still, as must be expected with foundlings, they can for the most part give no distinct account of

vulgo, et gignit traditque vulgo jactanda, nonnulla ducuntur ex fabularum argumentis; ex historiis aliquot mutuo sumpta sunt. Quædam profecta sunt ex apophthegmatis, hoc est, scite breviterque responsis. Sunt quæ ex verbo temere dicto sunt arrepta. Denique mores, ingenium, seu gentis, sive hominis alicujus, sive etiam animantis, postremo rei quoque vis quæpiam insignis et vulgo nota locum fecerunt adagio.

themselves. They make their way, relying on their own merits, not on the merits of their parents and authors; whom they have forgotten; and who seem equally to have forgotten them, or, at any rate, fail to claim them. Not seldom, too, when a story has been given to account for a proverb's rise, it must remain an open question, whether the story has not been subsequently imagined for the proverb, rather than the proverb grown out of the story.[1]

The proverb thus springing out of the actual life of men, however it may be often impossible to trace the circumstances of its rise, will continually turn back to life again. It will attest its own practical character by the frequency with which it will present itself for use, and will have been actually used upon earnest and important occasions; throwing its weight into one scale or the other at some critical moment, and sometimes with decisive effect. I have little doubt that with knowledge sufficient one might bring together a large collection of instances, wherein at significant moments the proverb has played its part, and, it may be,

[1] Livy's account of Cantherium in fossâ, and of the manner in which it became a rustic proverb in Italy (xxiii. 47), is a case in point, where it is very hard to give credit to the parentage which has been assigned to the saying (see Döderlein, *Lat. Synonyme*, vol. iv. p. 289).

helped to bring about issues, of which all would acknowledge the importance.

In this aspect, as having been used at some turning-point of things, and as part of the moral influence brought to bear on that occasion for effecting an important result, no proverb of man's can be compared with that one which the Lord used when He met his future Apostle, but then his persecutor, in the way, and warned him of the fruitlessness and folly of longer resistance to a might which must overcome him, and with a more disastrous overcoming, at the last: *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*[1] (Acts xxvi. 14). It is not always observed, while yet it adds much to the fitness of this proverb's use on this ever-memorable occasion, that it was already, even in that heathen world to which originally it belonged, predominantly used to note the madness of a striving on man's part against the overmastering power of the gods; for so we find it used in the chief passages of heathen antiquity in which it occurs.[2]

I must derive the second illustration of my

[1] Σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν.

[2] Æschylus, *Prom. Vinct.* 322; Euripides, *Bacch.* 795; Pindar, *Pyth.* ii. 94-96. The image is of course that of the stubborn ox, which when urged to go forward, recalcitrates against the sharp-pointed iron goad, and, already wounded, thus only wounds itself the more.

assertion from a very different quarter, passing at a single stride from the kingdom of light to the kingdom of darkness, and finding my example there. We are told then, that when Catherine de Médicis desired to overcome the hesitation of her son Charles the Ninth, and to draw from the wretched king his consent to the massacre, afterwards known as that of St. Bartholomew, she urged on him with effect a proverb, which she had brought with her from her own land, and assuredly one of the most convenient maxims for tyrants that was ever framed: *Sometimes clemency is cruelty, and cruelty clemency.*

Later French history supplies another and a more pleasant illustration. At the siege of Douay, in 1667, Lewis the Fourteenth found himself with his suite unexpectedly under a heavy cannonade from the besieged city. I cannot believe that Lewis was deficient in personal courage; yet, in compliance with the entreaties of most of those around him, who urged that he should not expose so important a life, he was about, in somewhat unsoldierly and unkingly fashion, immediately to retire; when M. de Charost, drawing close to him, whispered the well-known French proverb in his ear: *The wine is drawn; it must be drunk.*[1] The

[1] Le vin est versé; il faut le boire.

king remained exposed to the fire of the enemy for a suitable period, and it is said held in higher honour than before the counsellor who had with this word saved him from an unseemly retreat. Let this on the generation of proverbs, with the employment which at critical moments has been made of them, for the present suffice.

LECTURE III.

THE PROVERBS OF DIFFERENT NATIONS COMPARED.

'THE genius, wit, and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs,'—this is Lord Bacon's well-worn remark; although, indeed, only well-worn because of its truth. 'In them,' it has been further said, 'is to be found an inexhaustible source of precious documents in regard of the interior history, the manners, the opinions, the beliefs,[1] the customs of the people among whom they have had their

[1] The writer might have added, the superstitions; for proverbs not a few involve and rest on popular superstitions, and a collection of these would be curious and in many ways instructive. Such, for instance, is the Latin (it is, indeed, also Greek): *A serpent, unless it devour a serpent, grows not to a dragon*; (Serpens, nisi serpentem comederit, non fit draco); which Lord Bacon moralizes so shrewdly: 'The folly of one man is the fortune of another; for no man prospers so suddenly as by other men's errors.' Such again is the old German proverb: *The night is no man's friend* (Die Nacht ist keines Menschen Freund); which rests, as Grimm observes (*Deutsche Mythol.* p. 713) on the wide-spread feeling in the northern mythologies, of the night as an unfriendly and, indeed, hostile power to man. And such, too, the French: *A Sunday's child dies never of the plague* (Qui naît le dimanche, jamais ne meurt de peste).

course.'[1] Let us put these assertions to the proof, and see how far in this people's or in that people's proverbs their innermost heart speaks out to us; how far the comparison of the proverbs of one nation with those of other nations may be made instructive to us; what this comparison will tell us severally about each. This only I will ask, ere we enter upon the subject, that if I should fail here in drawing out anything strongly characteristic, if the proverbs regarded from this point of view should not seem to reveal to you any of the true secrets of national life, you will not therefore misdoubt those assertions with which my lecture opened; or assume that these documents would not yield up their secret, if questioned aright; but only believe that the test has been unskilfully applied; or, if you will, that my brief limits have not allowed me to make that clear, which with larger space I might not have wholly failed in doing.

I am very well aware that in pursuing this line of thought, one is ever liable to deceive oneself, to impose upon others, picking out and adducing such proverbs as conform to a precon-

[1] We may adduce further the words of Salmasius: Argutæ hæ brevesque loquendi formulæ suas habent veneres, et genium cujusque gentis penes quam celebrantur, atque acumen ostendunt.

ceived theory, passing over those which would militate against it. Quite allowing that there is such a danger which needs to be guarded against, and also that there are a multitude of these sayings which cannot be made to illustrate differences, for they rest on the broad foundation of the universal humanity, and not on anything which is peculiar and national, I am yet persuaded that enough of proverbs will remain, and such as may with perfect good faith be adduced, to confirm these assertions; I am convinced that we *may* learn from the proverbs current among a people, what is nearest and dearest to their hearts, the aspects under which they contemplate life, in what ways honour and dishonour are distributed among them, what is of good, what of evil report in their eyes, with very much more which it can never be unprofitable to know.

To begin, then, with the proverbs of Greece. That with which we are most struck in the study of these, and that which, the more they are studied, the more fills the thoughtful reader with astonishment, is the evidence they yield of a leavening through and through of the entire nation with the most intimate knowledge of its own mythology, history, and poetry. The infinite multitude of slight and

fine allusions to the legends of their gods and heroes, to the earlier incidents of their own history, to the Homeric narrative, the delicate side glances at all these which the Greek proverbs constantly embody,[1] assume an acquaintance, indeed a familiarity, with all this on their parts among whom they passed current, which is perfectly marvellous. In many and most important respects, the Greek proverbs, considered as a whole, are inferior to those of some nations of modern Christendom. This is nothing wonderful; Christianity would have done little for the world, would have proved very ineffectual for the elevating, purifying, and deepening of man's life, if it had been otherwise. But, with all this, as bearing testimony to the high intellectual training of the people who employed them, to a culture not restricted to certain classes, but which must have been diffused through the whole nation, no other collection can bear the remotest comparison with this.[2]

It is altogether different with the Roman proverbs. These, the genuine Roman, the growth of their own soil, are very far fewer in

[1] Thus Αἶδος κυνῆ—ἄπληστος πίθος—Ἰλιὰς κακῶν—Χαρώνιος θύρα—Λήμνιον κακόν—χρύσεα χαλκείων.

[2] On proverbs in general, but mainly on Greek proverbs, there is a pleasant article in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1868.

number than the Greek, as was indeed to be expected from the far less subtle and less fertile genius of the people. Hardly any of them are legendary or mythological; which again agrees with the fact that the Italian pantheon was very scantily peopled as compared with the Greek. Very few have much poetry about them, or any very rare delicacy or refinement of feeling. In the matter of love indeed, not the Roman only, but Greek and Roman alike, are immeasurably inferior to those which many modern nations could supply. Thus a proverb of such religious depth and beauty as our own, *Marriages are made in heaven*, it would have been quite impossible for all heathen antiquity to have produced, or even remotely to have approached.[1] In the setting out not of love, but of friendship, and of the claims which it makes, the blessings which it brings, is exhibited whatever depth and tender-

[1] This Greek proverb on love is the noblest of the kind which I remember: *Μουσικὴν ἔρως διδάσκει, κἄντις ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρίν.* I add a small group of Greek proverbs:—*Αἱ χάριτες γυμναί. —Καιρὸς εὔνοια οὐδὲν ἔχθρας διαφέρει.—γλυκὺς ἀπείρῳ πόλεμος. —ἀνδρὸς κακῶς πράσσοντος ἐκποδὼν φίλοι.—ἄρκτου παρούσης ἴχνη μὴ ζήτει.—ἀεὶ γεωργὸς εἰς νέωτα πλούσιος.—δὶς πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν αἰσχρὸν προσκρούειν λίθον.—ἐχθρῶν ἄδωρα δῶρα.—ζεῖ χύτρα, ζεῖ φιλία.—Θεὸς ἡ Ἀναίδεια.—κακοῦ κόρακος κακὸν ὠόν.—ἀνὴρ δὲ φεύγων οὐ μένει λύρας κτύπον.—κακῷ σὺν ἀνδρὶ μηδ' ὅλως ὁδοιπόρου.—δρῦος πεσούσης πᾶς ἀνὴρ ξυλεύεται.—ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων.*

ness of affection they may have.[1] This indeed, as has been truly observed,[2] was only to be expected, seeing how much higher an ideal of friendship existed in the old world than of love, the full realization of which was reserved for the modern Christian world. Yet the Roman proverbs are not without substantial merits of their own. A vigorous moral sense speaks out in many;[3] and even when this is not so prominent, they wear often a thoroughly old Roman aspect; being business-like and practical, frugal and severe, wise saws such as the elder

[1] In this respect the Latin proverb, Mores amici noveris, non oderis, on which Horace has furnished so exquisite a comment (*Sat.* i. 3. 24–93), and which finds its graceful equivalent in the Italian, Ama l'amico tuo con il difetto suo (*Love your friend with his fault*), is worthy of all admiration.

[2] By Zell, in his slight but graceful treatise, *On the Proverbs of the ancient Romans* (*Ferienschriften*, vol. ii. p. 1–96).

[3] Thus, Noxa caput sequitur;—Conscientia, mille testes. I subjoin a few more Latin proverbs; but of these two or three at least are medieval or modern. Heroum filii noxæ.—Lupus pilum mutat, non mentem.—Galeatum sero duelli pœnitet.—Gladiator in arenâ consilium capit.—Ex scintillâ incendium.—Sui cuique mores fingunt fortunam.—Ubi uber, ibi tuber.—Simul sorbere et flare difficile est.—Qui celocem agere nescit, onerariam ne petat [*Jer.* xii. 15].—Nescis quid serus vesper vehat.—Bona tergo formosissima.—Amicus certus in re incertâ cernitur.—Ubi amici, ibi opes.—Nunquam periclum sine periclo vincitur.—Sine pennis volare haud facile est.—Dies adimit ægritudinem.—Ars non habet osorem, nisi ignorantem.—Aliquis in omnibus est nullus in singulis.—Medice vivere est misere vivere.—Literæ martyrium non sequuntur.—Beneficium accipere, libertatem est vendere.—Homini diligenti semper aliquid superest.

Cato must have loved, such as will have been often upon his lips;[1] while in the number that relate to farming, they bear singular witness to that strong and lively interest in agricultural pursuits, which formed so remarkable a feature in the old Italian life.[2]

It will not be possible to pass under even this hastiest review more than a few of the modern families of proverbs. Let us turn first to the proverbs of Spain.[3] I put these in the foremost rank, because Spanish literature, poor in some provinces wherein many other literatures are rich, is eminently rich in this; and deserves this praise whether we regard the quantity or quality of the proverbs which it owns.[4] I should

[1] He has preserved for us that very sensible and at the same time truly characteristic one, Quod non opus est, asse carum est.

[2] These are three or four of the most notable—the first against 'high farming,' which I wonder has not been appealed to in modern controversies on the subject: Nihil minus expedit quam agrum optime colere (Pliny, *H. N.* vi. 18). Over against this, however, we must set another, warning against the attempt to farm with insufficient capital: Oportet agrum imbecilliorem esse quam agricolam; and yet another, on the liberal answer which the land will make to the pains and cost bestowed on it: Qui arat olivetum, rogat fructum; qui stercorat, exorat; qui cædit, cogit; and one more, which no doubt is true: Agricolam vendacem oportet esse, non emacem.

[3] On Spanish proverbs see Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature*, ch. 39.

[4] This was the judgment of Salmasius, who says: Inter Europæos Hispani in his excellunt, Itali vix cedunt, Galli proximo sequuntur intervallo.

call the mere number of Spanish proverbs astonishing, if it were not that the German proverbs, of which presently, are so far more numerous. A Spanish collection I have been using while preparing these lectures, contains between seven and eight thousand, and yet cannot pretend to contain all; for I have searched it in vain for several with which from other sources I had become acquainted. Nay, it must be very far indeed from exhausting the entire stock, seeing that there exists a manuscript collection brought together by a distinguished Spanish scholar, which is reported to contain from five and twenty to thirty thousand.[1]

And their quality keeps pace with their quantity. It needs only to call to mind some of those, so rich in humour, so double-shotted with homely good sense, wherewith the Squire in *Don Quixote* adorns his discourse, until oftentimes they constitute not the fringe and

[1] What may have become of this collection I know not; but it was formerly in Richard Heber's library (see the *Catalogue*, vol. 9. no. 1697). Juan Yriarte was the collector, and in a note to the *Catalogue* it is stated that he devoted himself with such eagerness to the bringing of it to the highest possible state of completeness, that he would give his servants a fee for any new proverb they brought him; while to each, as it was inserted in his list, he was careful to attach a memorandum of the quarter from which it came; and if this was not from books but from life, an indication of the name, the rank, and condition in life of the person from whom it was obtained.

border, but the main woof and texture of it: and then, if we assume that the remainder are not altogether unlike these, we shall acknowledge that it would be difficult to rate them more highly than they deserve. And some are in a loftier vein; we might indeed expect as much; for taking, as we have a right to do, Cervantes himself as the truest exponent of the Spanish character, we should be prepared to find in the proverbs of Spain a grave thoughtfulness, a stately humour, to find them breathing the very spirit of chivalry and honour, and indeed of freedom too; — for in Spain, as throughout so much of Europe, it is despotism, and not freedom, which is new. The expectation is abundantly fulfilled. How eminently chivalresque, for instance, the following: *White hands cannot hurt.*[1] What a grave humour lurks in this: *The ass knows well in whose face he brays.*[2] What a stately apathy, how proud a looking of calamity in the face, speaks out in the admonition which this one contains: *When thou seest thine house in flames, approach and*

[1] Las manos blancas no ofenden. Calderon has taken this for the title of one of his plays. Many of his plays, like Shakespeare's, have proverbs for their titles: thus, Mañana será otro dia—Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar—Guárdale de la agua mansa—Bien vengas, mal, si vienes solo.

[2] Bien sabe el asno en cuya cara rebozna.

warm thyself by it.[1] What a spirit of freedom, which refuses to be encroached on even by the highest, is embodied in another: *The king goes as far as he may, not as far as he would;*[2] what Castilian pride in the following: *Every layman in Castile might make a king, every clerk a pope.* The Spaniard's contempt for his peninsular neighbours finds emphatic utterance in another: *Take from a Spaniard all his good qualities, and there remains a Portuguese.*

We may too, I think, remark how a nation will occasionally in its proverbs indulge in a fine irony upon itself, and show that it is perfectly aware of its own weaknesses, follies, and faults. This the Spaniards must be allowed to do in their proverb, *Succours of Spain, either late, or never.*[3] However largely and confidently promised, these *Succours of Spain* either do not arrive at all, or only arrive after the opportunity in which they could have served has passed away. Certainly any one who reads the despatches of England's Great Captain during the Peninsular War will find in almost every page

[1] Quando vierás tu casa quemar, llega te á escalentar.

[2] El rey va hasta do puede, y no hasta do quiere.

[3] Socorros de España, ó tarde, ó nunca. The Italians have a proverb in which they express their sense of the tardiness of the despatch of all business in Spain, and the infinite delays which are sure to attend it—*May my death come to me from Spain*) Mi venga la morte da Spagna), for so it will come late or not at all.

of them justifications of this proverb, will own that those who made it read themselves aright, and could not have designated broken pledges, unfulfilled promises of aid, tardy and thus ineffectual assistance, by a happier title than *Succours of Spain*. And then, again, what a fearful glimpse of those blood-feuds which, having once begun, seem as if they could never end, blood touching blood, and violence evermore provoking its like, have we in the following: *Kill, and thou shalt be killed, and they shall kill him who kills thee.*[1]

[1] Matarás, y matarte han, y matarán á quien te matará. These which follow are all good, and some very good: Quien á lobo embia, carne espera.—Quien en la plaza á labrar se mete, muchos adestradores tiene.—Con agua pasada no muele molino.—Á carros quebrados carriles á fartos.—Buscais cinco pies al gato, y el no tiene sino cuatro.—En los nidos de antaño no hay pájaros hogaño.—El mal cobrador hace mal pagador.—La oveja lozana dijo á la cabra, Dame lana.—El dia que te casas ó te sanas, ó te matas.—Quando el corsario promete misas y cera, con mal anda la galera.—Quando Dios quiere, con todos vientos llueve.—Quando te diéren la vaquilla, acude con la soguilla.—Quando te diéren el anillo, pon el dedillo.—Pierde el lobo los dientes, mas no las mientes.—Quando mayor ventura, es menos segura.—Una vez salí, y diez me arrepentí.—Uno piensa el bayo, y otro el que lo ensilla.—Nacen las alas á la hormiga, para que se pierda mas aina.—No con cada mal al físico, ni con cada pleito al letrado, ni con cada sed al jarro.—Mas quiero asno que me lleve, que cavallo que me derrueque.—Jurado ha el baño de lo negro no hacer blanco.—Necio es, que piensa que otros no piensan.—Mas vale humo de mi casa que fuego de la agena.—Al fin se canta la gloria.—Aunque la mona se vesta de seda, mona se queda.—Quando pienses meter el diente en seguro, toparás en duro.—Mandan al mozo, y el mozo al gato, y el gato á su rabo.

The Italians also are eminently rich in proverbs; yet if ever I have been tempted to retract or seriously to modify what I shall have occasion by-and-bye to affirm of a nobler life and spirit as predominating in proverbs, it has been after the study of some Italian collection. 'The Italian proverbs,' it has been said not without too much reason, though perhaps also with overmuch severity, 'have taken a tinge from their deep and politic genius, and their wisdom seems wholly concentrated in their personal interests. I think every tenth proverb in an Italian collection is some cynical or some selfish maxim, a book of the world for worldlings.'[1] Certainly many of them are shrewd enough, and only too shrewd; ungracious, inculcating an universal suspicion, teaching to look everywhere for a foe, to expect, as the Greeks said, a scorpion under every stone, glorifying artifice and cunning as the true guides and only safe leaders through the perplexed labyrinth of life,[2] and altogether seeming dictated as by the very spirit of Machiavel himself.

[1] *Curiosities of Literature*, London: 1838, p. 391. Les Italiens s'y montrent rusés, gracieux et moqueurs, is the judgment of a French writer, F. Denis, in a slight but clever essay on what he calls *The Philosophy of Sancho*.

[2] These may serve as examples: Chi ha sospetto, di rado è in difetto.—Fidarsi è bene, ma non fidarsi è meglio.—Da chi mi

And worse than this is the glorification of revenge which speaks out in too many of them. I know nothing of its kind calculated to give one a more shuddering sense of horror than the series which might be drawn together of Italian proverbs on this matter; especially when we take them with the commentary which Italian history supplies, and which shows them no empty words, but truest utterances of the nation's heart. There is no misgiving in these about the right of entertaining so deadly a guest in the bosom; on the contrary, one of them, exalting the sweetness of revenge, declares, *Revenge is a morsel for God.*[1] There is nothing in them, (it would be far better if there were,) of blind and headlong passion, but rather a spirit of deliberate calculation, which makes the blood run cold. Thus one gives this advice: *Wait time and place to act thy revenge, for it is never well done in a hurry*;[2] while another proclaims an immortality of hatred, which no spaces of intervening time shall have availed to weaken: *Revenge of a hundred years old hath*

fido, mi guardi Iddio; da chi non mi fido, mi guarderò io.—Con arte e con inganno si vive mezzo l'anno; con inganno e con arte si vive l'altra parte.—A mal passo l'onore.

[1] Vendetta, boccon di Dio.

[2] Aspetta tempo e luogo a far tua vendetta, che la non si fa mai ben in fretta. Compare another: Vuoi far vendetta del tuo nemico, governati bene, ed è bell' e fatta.

still its sucking teeth.[1] We may well be thankful that we have in England, so far at least as I am aware, no sentiments parallel to these, embodied as the permanent convictions of the national mind.

How curious again is the confession which speaks out in another Italian proverb, that the maintenance of the Roman system and the study of Holy Scripture cannot go together. It is this: *With the Gospel one becomes a heretic.*[2] No doubt with the study of the Word of God one does become a heretic, in the Italian sense of the word.; and therefore it is only prudently done to put all obstacles in the way of that study, to assign three years' and four years' imprisonment with hard labour, as was lately assigned in Spain, to as many as shall dare to peruse it; yet certainly it is not a little remarkable that such a confession should have embodied itself in the popular utterances of the nation.

But while it must be freely owned that the charges brought just now against the Italian proverbs are sufficiently borne out by too many, they are not all to be included in the common shame. Very many there are not merely of a delicate refinement of beauty, as this, expres-

[1] Vendetta di cent' anni ha ancor i lattaiuoli.

[2] Con l' Evangelo si diventa eretico.

sive of the freedom in regard of *thine* and *mine* which will exist between true friends: *Friends tie their purses with a spider's thread*;[1] and of a subtle wisdom which has *not* degenerated into cunning and deceit; others too of a still nobler stamp; honour and honesty, plain dealing and uprightness, have here their praises, and are not seldom pronounced to be in the end more than a match for all cunning and deceit. How excellent in this sense is the following: *For an honest man half his wits is enough, the whole are too little for a knave*;[2] the ways, that is, of truth and uprightness are so simple and plain, that a little wit is abundantly sufficient for those who walk in them; the ways of falsehood and fraud are so perplexed and crooked, that sooner or later all the wit of the cleverest rogue will not preserve him from being entangled therein. How often and how wonderfully has this found its confirmation in the lives of evil men; so true it is, to employ another proverb and a very deep one from the same quarter, that *The devil is subtle, yet weaves a coarse web.*[3]

[1] Gli amici lègono la borsa con un filo di ragnatelo.

[2] Ad un uomo dabbene avanza la metà del cervello; ad un tristo non basta ne anche tutto.

[3] Jeremy Taylor appears to have found much delight in the proverbs of Italy. In the brief foot-notes appended to his *Holy Living* I counted five and twenty such, to which he makes more or less remote allusion in the text. There is an excellent article on 'Tuscan Proverbs' in *Fraser's Magazine*, Jan. 1857.

Whatever other merits German proverbs possess, and they possess many, and of such different kinds that it is difficult if not impossible to seize their *most* characteristic features, they certainly possess the merit of being the most numerous family of proverbs in existence; but I must not tarry with them.[1]

I subjoin a small group. A nave rotta ogni vento è contrario.—Chi ha tempo, non aspetti tempo.—Chi ha la sanità è ricco, e non lo sa.—Chi non dà fine al pensare, non dà principio a fare.—Fammi indovino, ed io ti farò ricco.—Fra l'incudine e 'l martello non metta la mano chi ha cervello.—Chi edifica, sua borsa purifica.—La morte sempre trova qualche scusa.—Il diavolo è facile da invitare, ma non da scacciare.—È meglio cader della finestra che del tetto.—Chi piglia leoni in assenza suol temer dei topi in presenza.—Chi troppo abbraccia, nulla stringe.—Chi offende, scrive nella rena, chi è offeso nel marmo.—Ad un tristo un tristo e mezzo.—Il diavolo tenta tutti, ma l'ozioso tenta il diavolo.—A fiume famoso non andar a pesca.—Chi vuol il lavoro mal fatto, paghi innanzi tratto.—Chi non vuol servir ad un sol signor, a molti ha da servir.—Chi si fa fango, il porco lo calpesta.—Corpo satollo non crede all'affamato.—Dall'acqua cheta mi guardi Iddio, dalle correnti mi guarderò io.—Chi ha arte da per tutto ha parte [cf. Phædrus, *Fab.* iv. 21].—Chi asino è, e cervo esser si crede, al saltar del fosso se n'avvede.—Se il giovine sapesse, ed il vecchio potesse, non v'è cosa che non si facesse.

[1] I was disposed once to claim this pre-eminence for the proverbs of Spain, but the 30,000 of which I spoke just now are already outnumbered by the contents of the first volume of Wander's *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexicon*, which is in course of publication (1869). This volume contains some 45,000 proverbs, and another volume which is publishing at present will bring the whole number very nearly to 100,000—if this almost incredible number is not exceeded. It may give some notion of the German opulence in this line of things when I mention that under 'Haus'

English proverbs in like manner have so many excellencies without having any one excellence which is greatly predominant, that in their case also it is difficult to seize upon features which more than any other are peculiarly their own. With Scotch it is easier. Of course an immense number of Scotch proverbs are identical with ours, or it may be, distinguished from them only by slight dialectic differences. But this is by no means the case with all. Many of ours, so far as I can see, have never had free course in Scotland; while Scotland in the same way possesses many which have never crossed the border, and in which we have no share. Other nations may own larger collections of proverbs, and may produce single proverbs of a grace, tenderness and elevation, which none of these can match; but I know of no collection so uniformly good, in which so few

are ranged 686 proverbs, under 'Frau' 770, under 'Glück' 1025, under 'Gott' 2660; that is, there is this number of proverbs in which these severally constitute the principal word; while other words yield proverbs in the same proportion. I subjoin a very small handful of these:—Die Augen sind weiter als der Bauch.—Mancher sucht Einen Pfennig, und verbrennt dabei drei Lichter.—Dem Esel träumet von Disteln.—Frau und Mond leuchten mit fremdem Licht.—Es giebt mehr Diebe als Galgen.—Dem Diebe will kein Baum gefallen, daran er hänge.—Gedanken sind zollfrei, aber nicht höllenfrei.—Besser zweimal fragen, denn einmal irre gehn.—Was man Gott opfern will, muss man nicht von Teufel einsegnen lassen.—Vermögen sucht Vermögen.—Zu viel Glück ist Unglück.

flat, pointless, and merely trivial are to be found. Their one serious fault as a whole is that there are so few among them which move in, or assume, or at all reach out after, a higher world than that in which we commonly move; but as maxims of prudential morality they deserve all praise. Thus, what better in this way could be found than the following: *Raise nae mair deils than ye're able to lay?* It need not be said that they are canny; and some overcanny and with the touch of a too visible contempt for those that are otherwise; as, for instance, this one: *Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them.* They are almost always witty; as these are: *As long as ye serve the tod* [the fox], *ye maun carry his tail—A craw is nae whiter for being washed—Dinna lift me before I fall—As good eat the deil, as the kail he's boiled in*; while this, if not witty yet is wise, *Better keep the deil out than hae to turn him out.* This that follows is in a higher strain, in that strain of which I just now complained that Scotch proverbs offer too few examples: *A thread will tie an honest man better than a rope will do a rogue.*

The proverbs of the Eastern world go far to tell the story of the East. Thus, what description of Egypt as it now is, could set us at the heart of its moral condition, could make us to understand all which long centuries of oppres-

sion and misrule have made of it and of its people, what, I say, could do this so effectually as the Arabic proverbs now current there?[1] In other books, others describe the modern Egyptians, but here they unconsciously describe themselves. The selfishness, the utter extinction of all public spirit, the servility, which no longer as with an inward shame creeps into men's acts, but utters itself boldly as the avowed law of their lives, the sense of the oppression of the strong, of the insecurity of the weak, and, generally, the whole character of life, as poor, mean, sordid, and ignoble, with only a few faintest glimpses of that romance which one usually attaches to the East; all this, as we study these documents, rises up before us in clearest, though in painfullest, outline.

Thus only in a land where rulers, being evil themselves, instinctively feel all goodness to be their foe, and themselves therefore entertain a corresponding hostility to it, where they punish but never reward, where not to be noticed by them is the highest ambition of those under their yoke, in no other save a land like this could a proverb like the following, *Do no good, and thou shalt find no evil*, have ever come to

[1] These *Arabic Proverbs of the Modern Egyptians*, London: 1830, were collected by the traveller Burckhardt, and after his death published with his name.

the birth. How assured a conviction that wrong, and not right, is the lord paramount of the world must have settled down on men's spirits, before such a word as this, (I know of no sadder one,) could have found utterance from their lips.[1]

I have taken a wide circuit of nations; with the proverb of a people nearer home I must bring this branch of the subject to an end. It is one, and a very characteristic one, which the poet Spenser, who long dwelt in Ireland, records as current in his time among the Irish; in which was contained their offer of service

[1] Yet this very mournful collection of Burckhardt's possesses at least one very beautiful proverb on the all-conquering power of love: *Man is the slave of beneficence.* I will add a few others, Persian, Arabic, Turkish. They all seem to me to possess more or less merit, and some to be eminently characteristic of that East to which they belong. He who has need of a dog, calls him Sir Dog.—He is the true sage who learns from all the world.—It is ill sport between the cotton and the fire.—Treat thy horse as a friend, and mount him as an enemy.—Two watermelons are not held in one hand.—Thou wilt catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a cask of vinegar.—The king makes free with an apple; his servants have cut down the tree.—If the monkey reigns, dance before him.—Though thy friend be honey, do not swallow him up.—Keep the dogs near when thou suppest with the wolf.—Who chatters *to* you, will chatter *of* you.—The dust of the sheepfold is ointment for the sore eyes of the wolf.—Cast thy bread upon the waters; God will know of it, if the fishes do not.—Stones and sticks are flung only at fruit-bearing trees.—When once thy cart is overturned, everyone will point out to thee the way.

to their native chiefs, with a statement of what they expected in return: *Spend me, and defend me.* Their leaders in all times have taken them only too well at their word in respect of the first half of the proverb, and have not failed prodigally to *spend* them; although their undertakings to *defend* have issued exactly as must ever issue all engagements on the part of others to defend men from those evils, from which none can really protect them but themselves.

Other families of proverbs would each of them tell its own tale, give up its own secret; but I must not seek from this point of view to question them further. I would rather bring now to your notice that even where they do not spring, as they cannot all, from the centre of a people's heart, nor declare to us the secretest things which are there, but dwell more on the surface of things, they have still oftentimes local or national features, which to study and trace out may prove both curious and instructive. Of how many, for example, we may note the manner in which they clothe themselves in an outward form and shape, borrowed from, or suggested by, the peculiar scenery or circumstances or history of their own land; so that they could scarcely have come into existence at all, not certainly in the shape which they now

wear, anywhere besides. Thus our own, *Make hay while the sun shines*, is truly English, and could have had its birth only under such variable skies as ours,—not, at any rate, in those southern lands where, during the summer time at least, the sun always shines. In the same way a fine Cornish proverb tells the story of obstinate wrongheads, who will take no warning except from calamities, dashing themselves to pieces against obstacles, which with a little prudence and foresight they might easily have avoided: *He who will not be ruled by the rudder, must be ruled by the rock.* It sets us at once upon some rocky and wreck-strewn coast; we feel that it could never have been the proverb of an inland people. And this, *Do not talk Arabic in the house of a Moor*,[1]—that is, because there thy imperfect knowledge will be detected at once,—this we should confidently affirm to be Spanish, wherever we met it. So also a traveller with any experience in the composition of Spanish sermons and Spanish dishes could make no mistake about the following: *A sermon without Augustine is as a stew without bacon.*[2] Thus *Big and empty, like the Heidelberg tun*,[3] could have its home only in Germany; that

[1] En casa del Moro no hables algarabia.

[2] Sermon sin Agostino, olla sin tocino.

[3] Gross und leer, wie das Heidelberger Fass.

enormous vessel, known as the Heidelberg tun, constructed to contain nearly 300,000 flasks, having now stood empty for hundreds of years. As little does the following, *Not every village priest can wear Dr. Luther's shoes*,[1] leave us in any doubt to what people it appertains. And this, *The world is a carcase, and they who gather round it are dogs*, plainly proclaims itself as belonging to those Eastern lands, where the unowned dogs prowling about the streets of a city are the natural scavengers, that assemble round a carcase thrown in the way. So too the form which our own proverb, *Man's extremity, God's opportunity*, or as we sometimes have it, *When need is highest, help is nighest*, assumes among the Jews, namely this, *When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses comes*,[2] plainly roots itself in the early history of that nation, being an allusion to Exod. v. 9–19, and without a knowledge of that history would be unintelligible altogether. The same may be said of this: *We must creep into Ebal, and leap into Gerizim*; in other words, we must be slow to curse, and swift to bless (Deut. xxvii. 12, 13).

[1] Doctor Luther's Schuhe sind nicht allen Dorfpriestern gerecht.

[2] Cum duplicantur lateres, Moses venit. This proverb was a favourite one with the German Protestants during the worst times of the Thirty Years War. Gustavus Adolphus was the Moses who came in the hour of uttermost need.

But while it is thus with some, which are bound by the very conditions of their existence to a narrow and peculiar sphere, or at all events move more naturally and freely in it than elsewhere, there are others on the contrary which we meet all the world over. True cosmopolites, they seem to have travelled from land to land, and to have made themselves a home equally in all. The Greeks obtained them probably from the older East, and again imparted them to the Romans; and from these they have found their way into all the languages of the modern world.

Much, I think, might be learned from knowing what those truths are, which are so felt to be true by all nations, that all have loved to possess them in these compendious forms, wherein they may pass readily from mouth to mouth: which, thus cast into some happy form, have commended themselves to almost all people, and have become a portion of the common stock of the world's wisdom, in every land making for themselves a recognition and a home. Such a proverb, for instance, is *Man proposes, God disposes*;[1] one which I am inclined to believe that every nation in Europe possesses, so deeply upon all men is impressed the sense

[1] La gente pone, y Dios dispone.—Der Mensch denkt's; Gott lenkt's.

of Hamlet's words, if not the very words themselves:

> 'There's a divinity that *shapes* our ends,
> *Rough-hew* them how we will.'

Sometimes the proverb does not actually in so many words repeat itself in various tongues. We have indeed exactly the same *thought*; but it takes an outward shape and embodiment, varying according to the various countries and periods in which it has been current: we have proverbs totally diverse from one another in their form and appearance, but which yet, when looked at a little deeper, prove to be at heart one and the same, all these their differences being only, so to speak, variations of the same air. These are almost always an amusing, often an instructive, study; and to trace this likeness in difference has an interest lively enough. Thus the *forms* of the proverb, which brings out the absurdity of those reproving others for a defect or a sin, which cleaves in an equal or in a greater degree to themselves, have sometimes no visible connexion at all, or the very slightest, with one another; yet for all this the proverb is at heart and essentially but one. We say in English: *The kiln calls the oven*, '*Burnt house;*' —The Italians: *The pan says to the pot*, '*Keep off, or you'll smutch me;*'[1]—the Spaniards: *The*

[1] La padella dice al pajuolo, Fatti in là, che tu mi tigni.

raven cried to the crow, '*Avaunt, blackamoor;*'[1] —the Germans: *One ass nicknames another, Long-ears*;[2] —while it must be owned there is a certain originality in the Catalan version of the proverb: *Death said to the man with his throat cut,* '*How ugly you look.*' Under how rich a variety of forms does one and the same thought array itself here.

Let me quote another illustration of the same fact. We probably take for granted that *Coals to Newcastle* is a thoroughly English expression of the absurdity of sending to a place that which already abounds there, water to the sea, faggots to the wood:—and English of course it is in the outward garment which it wears; but in its innermost being it belongs to the whole world and to all times. Thus the Greeks said: *Owls to Athens,*[3] Attica abounding with these birds; the Rabbis: *Enchantments to Egypt,* Egypt being of old esteemed the head quarters of all magic; the Orientals: *Pepper to Hindostan*; and in the Middle Ages they had this proverb: *Indulgences to Rome,* Rome being the centre and source of this spiritual traffic; and these by no means exhaust the list.

[1] Dijo la corneja al cuervo, Quítate allá, negro.

[2] Ein Esel schimpft den andern, Langohr.

[3] Γλαῦκας εἰς Ἀθήνας.

I adduce some other variations of the same kind, though not running through quite so many languages. Thus compare the German, *Who lets one sit on his shoulders, shall have him presently sit on his head,*[1] with the Italian, *If thou suffer a calf to be laid on thee, within a little they'll clap on the cow,*[2] and, again, with the Spanish, *Give me where I may sit down; I will make where I may lie down.*[3] They all three plainly contain one and the same hint that undue liberties are best resisted at the outset, being otherwise sure to be followed up by other and greater ones; but this under how rich and humorous a variety of forms. Not very different are these that follow. We say: *Daub yourself with honey, and you'll be covered with flies;* the Danes: *Make yourself an ass, and you'll have every man's sack on your shoulders;* while the French: *Who makes himself a sheep, the wolf devours him;*[4] and the Persians: *Be not all sugar, or the world will gulp thee down;*[5] to which they add, however, as its necessary

[1] Wer sich auf der Achsel sitzen lässt, dem sitzt man nachher auf dem Kopfe.

[2] Se ti lasci metter in spalla il vitello, quindi a poco ti metteran la vacca.

[3] Dame donde me asiente, que yo haré donde me acueste.

[4] Qui se fait brebis, le loup le mange.

[5] There is a Catalan proverb to the same effect: Qui de tot es moll, de tot es foll.

complement, *nor yet all wormwood, or the world will spit thee out.* Or again, we are content to say without a figure: *The receiver's as bad as the thief*; but the French: *He sins as much who holds the sack, as he who puts into it:*[1] and the Germans: *He who holds the ladder is as guilty as he who mounts the wall.*[2] We say: *A stitch in time saves nine;* the Spaniards: *Who repairs not his gutter, repairs his whole house.*[3] We say: *Misfortunes never come single*; the Italians have no less than three proverbs to express the same popular conviction: *Blessed is that misfortune which comes single*; and again: *One misfortune is the vigil of another*; and again: *A misfortune and a friar are seldom alone.*[4] The Germans say: *Many go out for wool and come back shorn*; but the Romans long ago: *The camel that desired horns lost even its ears.*[5] Many languages have this proverb: *God gives the cold according to the cloth*;[6] it is very beautiful, but attains not to

[1] Autant pèche celui qui tient le sac, que celui qui met dedans.

[2] Wer die Leiter hält, ist so schuldig wie der Dieb.

[3] Quien no adoba gotera, adoba casa entera.

[4] Benedetto è quel male, che vien solo.—Un mal è la vigilia dell' altro.—Un male e un frate di rado soli.

[5] Camelus cornua desiderans etiam aures perdidit. The camel in Æsop's fable asks horns of Jove. Indignant at the foolish request, he deprives it of its ears.

[6] Dieu donne le froid selon le drap.—Cada cual siente el frio como anda vestido.

the tender beauty of our own: *God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.*

And, as in that last example, so not seldom will there be an evident superiority of a proverb in one language over one, which at the same time resembles it closely in another. Moving in the same sphere, it will yet be richer, fuller, deeper. Thus our own, *A burnt child fears the fire,* is good; but that of many tongues, *A scalded dog fears cold water,* is better still. Ours does but express that those who have suffered once will henceforward be timid in respect of that same thing from which they have suffered; but that other the tendency to exaggerate such fears, so that now they shall fear where no fear is. And the fact that so it will be, clothes itself in an almost infinite variety of forms. Thus one Italian proverb says: *A dog which has been beaten with a stick, is afraid of its shadow*;[1] and another, which could only have had its birth in the sunny South, where the glancing but harmless lizard so often darts across your path: *Whom a serpent has bitten, a lizard alarms.*[2] With a little variation from this, the Jewish Rabbis had said long before: *One bitten by a serpent, is afraid of a rope's end*; even that which bears so remote a resemblance to a ser-

[1] In Spanish: Quien del alacran está picado, la sombra le espanta.

[2] Cui serpe mozzica, lucerta teme.

pent as this does, shall now inspire him with terror; and the Cingalese, still expressing the same thought, but with imagery borrowed from their own tropical clime: *The man who has received a beating from a firebrand, runs away at sight of a firefly.*

Some of our Lord's sayings contain the same lessons which the proverbs of the Jewish Rabbis contained already; for He was willing to bring forth even from his treasury things old as well as new; but it is very instructive to observe how they acquire in his mouth a dignity and decorum which, it may be, they wanted before. We are all familiar with that word in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.' The Rabbis had a proverb to match, lively and piquant enough, but certainly lacking the gravity of this, and which never could have fallen from the same lips: *If thy neighbour call thee ass, put a packsaddle on thy back*; do not, that is, withdraw thyself from the wrong, but rather go forward to meet it. But thus, in least as in greatest, it was His to make all things new.

Sometimes a proverb, without changing its shape altogether, will yet on the lips of different nations be slightly modified; and these modifications, slight as often they are, may not the

less be eminently characteristic. Thus in English we say, *The river past, and God forgotten*, to express with how mournful a frequency He whose assistance was invoked, and perhaps earnestly invoked, in the moment of peril, is remembered no more, so soon as by his help the danger has been surmounted. The Spaniards have the proverb too; but it is with them: *The river past, the saint forgotten*,[1] the saints being in Spain more prominent objects of invocation than God. And the Italian form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: *The peril past, the saint mocked*;[2] the vows made to him in peril remaining unperformed in safety; and he treated somewhat as, in Greek story, Juno was treated by Mandrabulus the Samian. Of him we are told that having under her auspices and through her direction discovered a gold mine, in his instant gratitude he vowed to her a golden ram; which he presently exchanged in intention for a silver one; and again this for a very small brass one; and this for nothing at all. Certainly the rapidly descending scale of the gratitude of this gold-finder, with little by little the entire disappearance of his thank-offering, might very profitably live in our memories, as so perhaps it would be less likely to repeat itself in our lives.

[1] El rio pasado, el santo olvidado.

[2] Passato il punto, gabbato il santo.

LECTURE IV.

THE POETRY, WIT, AND WISDOM OF PROVERBS.

I SHALL endeavour in my three remaining lectures to justify the attention which I have claimed on behalf of proverbs, not merely by appealing to the authority of others, who in many different lands and in many different ages have prized and made much of them, but by bringing out and setting before you, so far as I have the skill to do this, some of the excellences by which they are mainly distinguished. Their wit, their wisdom, their poetry, the delicacy, the fairness, the manliness which characterize so many of them, their morality, their theology, will all by turns come under our consideration. At the same time I shall beware of presenting them to you as though they embodied these nobler qualities only. I shall not keep out of sight that there are proverbs, coarse, selfish, unjust, cowardly, profane; 'maxims' wholly undeserving of the honour implied by that name.[1] Still as my pleasure, and I doubt not yours, is rather in

[1] Regulæ quæ inter *maximas* numerari merentur.

the wheat than in the tares, I shall, while I make no attempt to keep these out of sight, prefer to dwell in the main on the nobler features which they present.

And first, of the poetry of proverbs. Whatever is *from* the people, or truly *for* the people, whatever either springs from their bosom, or has been cordially accepted by them, still more whatever unites both these conditions, will have poetry, imagination, in it. For little as the people's craving after wholesome nutriment of the imaginative faculty, and after an entrance into a fairer and more harmonious world than that sordid and confused one with which often they are surrounded, is duly met and satisfied, still they yearn after all this with an honest hearty yearning, such as may well put to shame the palled indifference, the only affected enthusiasm of too many, whose opportunities of cultivating this glorious faculty have been so immeasurably greater than theirs. This being so, and proverbs being, as we have seen, the sayings that have found favour with the people, their peculiar inheritance, we may confidently anticipate that there will be poetry, imagination, passion, in them. A closer examination will not put this our confidence to shame.

Bold imagery, lively comparisons will scarcely be wanting in them. Nor indeed are they. As

a proof, let serve our own: *Gray hairs are death's blossoms*;[1] or the Italian: *Time is an inaudible file*;[2] or the Greek: *Man a bubble*;[3] which Jeremy Taylor has expanded into such glorious poetry in the opening of the *Holy Dying*; or that Turkish: *Death is a black camel which kneels at every man's gate*; to take up, that is, the burden of a coffin there; or this Arabic one, on the never satisfied eye of desire: *Nothing but a handful of dust will fill the eye of man*; or another from the same quarter, worthy of Mecca's prophet himself, and of the earnestness with which he realized Gehenna, whatever else he may have come short in: *There are no fans in hell*; or this other, also from the East: *Hold all skirts of thy mantle extended, when heaven is raining gold*; improve, that is, to the uttermost the happier crises of thy spiritual life; or this Indian, to the effect that good should be returned for evil: *The sandal tree perfumes the axe that fells it*; or this one, current in the Middle Ages: *Whose life lightens, his words thunder*;[4] or once more, this Chinese: *Towers are measured by their shadows,*

[1] In German: Grau' Haare sind Kirchhofsblumen.

[2] Il tempo è una lima sorda.

[3] Πομφόλυξ ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

[4] Cujus vita fulgor, ejus verba tonitrua. Cf. Mark iii. 17: υἱοὶ βροντῆς.

and great men by their calumniators; however this last may have a somewhat artificial air as tried by our standard of the proverb.

There is a French proverb: *One can go very far after one is weary*;[1] which appears to me to have the poetry of an infinite sadness about it, when one gives it that larger range of application which it is capable of receiving, and which no doubt it was intended to receive. How many are the pilgrims utterly weary of the task and toil of life, who are still far off from their journey's end; and who despite of this their weariness will have no choice but to fulfil those long stages of their journey which it may still remain for them to fulfil.

There may be poetry in a play upon words; and such we shall hardly fail to acknowledge in that beautiful Spanish proverb: *La verdad es siempre verde*, which I must leave in its original form; for were I to translate it, *The truth is always green*, its charm and chief beauty would have disappeared. It finds a pendant and complement in another, which I must despair no less of adequately rendering: *Gloria vana florece, y no grana*; all glory, this would say, which is not true, can shoot up into stalk and ear, but can never attain to the full grain in the ear. Nor can we refuse the title of poetry to

[1] On va bien loin depuis qu'on est las.

this Eastern proverb, in which the wish that a woman may triumph over her enemies clothes itself thus: *May her enemies stumble over her hair*;—may she flourish so, may her hair, the outward sign of this prosperity, grow so rich and long, may it so sweep the ground, that her detractors and persecutors may be entangled by it and fall.

And then, how exquisitely witty many proverbs are. Thus, not to speak of one familiar to us all, which is perhaps the queen of all proverbs: *The road to hell is paved with good intentions*; and admirably glossed in the *Guesses at Truth*: 'Pluck up the stones, ye sluggards, and break the devil's head with them,' take this Scotch one: *A man may love his house well, without riding on the ridge*; it is enough for a wise man to know what is precious to himself, without making himself ridiculous by evermore proclaiming it to the world; or this of our own, which so far as I know has not hitherto found its way into any of our collections: *When the devil is dead, he never lacks a chief mourner*; in other words, there is no abuse so enormous, no evil so flagrant, but that the interests or passions of some will be so bound up in its continuance that they will lament its extinction; or this Italian: *When rogues go in procession,*

the devil holds the cross;[1] when evil men have it their own way, then worst is best, and in the inverted hierarchy which is then set up, the foremost in badness is foremost also in such honour as is going. Or consider how happily the selfishness and bye-ends which too often preside at men's very prayers are detected and noted in this Portuguese: *Cobblers go to mass, and pray that cows may die*;[2] in the hope, that is, that leather may be cheap; or, take another, a German one, noting with slightest exaggeration a measure of charity which is only too common: *He will swallow an egg, and give away the shells in alms*; or this from the Talmud, whose interpretation I leave to yourselves: *All kinds of wood burn silently, except thorns, which crackle and cry out, We too are wood.* While treating of witty proverbs, I know of no wittier, and it is something more than witty, for rightly followed up it may lead to some very deep heartsearchings, than this of our own, *The cat shuts its eyes while it steals cream.* How often men become wilfully blind to the wrong which is involved in some pleasing or gainful sin, refuse to see the evil of it; and

[1] Quando i furbi vanno in processione, il diavolo porta la croce.

[2] Vão a missa çapateiros, rogão a Deos que morrão os carneiros.

may thus be fitly compared to the cat in the adage, shutting its eyes while it steals cream.

The wit of proverbs spares few or none. They are, as may be supposed, especially intolerant of fools. *We* say: *Fools grow without watering*; no need therefore of adulation or flattery, to quicken them to a ranker growth; for indeed *The more you stroke the cat's tail, the more he raises his back*;[1] and the Russians: *Fools are not planted or sowed; they grow of themselves*; and the Danes: *Fools have no need of a passport*,[2] they present themselves everywhere without one; while the Spaniards: *If folly were a pain, there would be crying in every house*;[3] having further an exquisitely witty one on the folly of a pedant as the most intolerable of all follies: *A fool, unless he know Latin, is never a great fool.*[4] And here is excellently unfolded to us the secret of the fool's confidence: *Who knows nothing, doubts nothing.*[5]

The shafts of their pointed satire are directed with an admirable impartiality against men of every degree, so that none of us will be found to have wholly escaped. To pass over those,

[1] This is Swedish: Zu mera man stryken Katten pá Swanzen, zu mera pyser pan.

[2] Galne Folk have ey Pas-Bord fornöden.

[3] Si la locura fuese dolores, en cada casa darian voces.

[4] Tonto, sin saber latin, nunca es gran tonto.

[5] Qui rien ne sait, de rien ne doute.

and they are exceedingly numerous, which are aimed at members of the monastic orders,[1] I must fain hope that this Bohemian one, pointing at the clergy, is not true; for it certainly argues no very forgiving temper on our parts in cases where we have been, or fancy ourselves to have been, wronged. It is as follows: *If you have offended a clerk, kill him;*[2] *else you will never have peace with him.* And another proverb, worthy to take its place among the best even of the Spanish, charges the clergy with being the authors of the chiefest spiritual mischiefs which have risen up in the Church: *By the vicar's skirts the devil climbs up into the belfry.*[3] Nor do physicians appear in the Middle Ages to have been in very high reputation for piety; for a Latin medieval proverb boldly proclaims: *Where there are three physicians, there are two atheists.*[4] And as for

[1] An earnest preacher of righteousness just before the Reformation quotes this one as current about them: Quod agere veretur obstinatus diabolus, intrepide agit reprobus et contumax monachus.

[2] It is Hus who, denouncing the sins of the clergy of his day, records this proverb: Malum proverbium contra nos confinxerunt, dicentes, Si offenderis clericum, interfice eum; alias nunquam habebis pacem cum illo.

[3] Por las haldas del vicario sube el diablo al campanario.

[4] Ubi tres medici, duo athei. Chaucer, it will be remembered, introduces this as one trait of his Doctour of Phisike,

'His studie was but litel on the Bible.'

Of course those which imply that they shorten rather than pro

lawyers, this of the same period, *Legista, nequista*,[1] expresses itself not with such brevity only, but with such downright plainness of speech, that I shall excuse myself from attempting to render it into English. Nor do other sorts and conditions of men escape. 'The miller tolling with his golden thumb,' has been often the object of malicious insinuations; and of him the Germans have a proverb: *What is bolder than a miller's neckcloth, which takes a thief by the throat every morning?*[2] Evenhanded justice might perhaps require that I should find caps for other heads; and it is not that such are wanting, nor yet out of fear lest any should be offended, but only because I must needs hasten onward, that I refrain. And yet one word before I hasten onward. I said just now that the shafts of their pointed satire were directed against men of every degree. I might have said against 'persons' of every degree; for let not 'persons' suppose that they escape; certainly not wives, when a proverb so ungallant as this is current about them: *Next to nae wife, a gude wife is the best*; and maidens

long the term of life, are numerous, as for instance, the old French: Qui court après le mière, court après la bière.

[1] In German: Juristen, bösen Christen.

[2] Bebel: Dicitur in proverbio nostro: nihil esse audacius indusio molitoris, cum omni tempore matutino furem collo apprehendat.

as little, when the same soil which yielded that I have just quoted, has yielded this as well, *All are gude lasses; but where do all the ill wives come frae?*'

What a fine knowledge of the human heart will they often display. This Persian saying for example on the subtleties of pride, though I know not whether it deserves the name of proverb in the strictest sense of the word: *Thou shalt sooner detect an ant moving in the dark night on the black earth, than all the motions of pride in thine heart.* And on the wide reach of this sin the Italians say: *If pride were an art, how many graduates we should have*;[1] and how excellent and searching is this word of theirs on the infinitely various shapes which this protean sin will assume: *There is who despises pride with a greater pride*,[2] one which might almost seem to have been founded on the story of Diogenes, who, treading under his feet a rich carpet of Plato's, exclaimed, 'Thus I trample on the ostentation of Plato;' 'With an ostentation of thine own,' was the sage's excellent retort;—even as on another occasion he observed, with admirable wit, that he saw the pride of the Cynic peeping through the rents of his mantle: for indeed pride can array itself quite

[1] Se la superbia fosse arte, quanti dottori avressimo.

[2] Tal sprezza la superbia con una maggior superbia.

as easily in rags as in purple; can affect squalors as eagerly as splendours; the lowest place and last is of itself no security at all for humility; and out of a sense of this *we* very well have said: *As proud go behind as before.*

Sometimes in their subtle observation of life, they arrive at conclusions which we would very willingly question or reject if we might, but to which it is impossible to refuse a certain amount of assent. Thus it is with the very striking German proverb: *One foe is too many; and a hundred friends too few.*[1] There speaks out in this a sense of the much more *active* principle in this world which enmity will too often prove than love. The hundred friends will *wish* you well; but the one foe will *do* you ill. Their benevolence will be ordinarily passive; his malevolence will be constantly active; it will be *animosity*, or spiritedness in evil. The proverb will have its use, if we are stirred up by it to prove its assertion false, to show that, in very many cases at least, there is no such blot as it would fix on the scutcheon of true friendship. In the same rank of unwelcome proverbs I must range this Persian one: *Of four things every man has more than he knows: of sins, of debts, of years, and of foes;* and this Spanish: *One father can support ten*

[1] Ein Feind ist zu viel; und hundert Freunde sind zu wenig.

children; ten children cannot support one father; this last, so far as it rests upon a ground of truth, attesting the comparative weakness of the filial as set over against the paternal affection, so that to the one those acts of self-sacrificing love are easy, which to the other are hard, and often impossible. At the same time, seeing that it is the order of God's providence in the world that fathers should in all cases support children, while it is the exception when children are called on to support parents, one can only admire that wisdom which has made the instincts of natural affection to run rather in the descending than in the ascending line; a wisdom to which this proverb, though with a certain exaggeration of the facts, bears witness.

How exquisitely delicate is the touch of this French proverb: *It is easy to go afoot, when one leads one's horse by the bridle.*[1] How fine and subtle an insight into the inner workings of the human heart is here; how many cheap humilities are in this proverb set at their true worth. It *is* easy to stoop from state, when that state may be resumed at will; to forego the homage which may be reclaimed at any moment, easy to part with luxuries and indulgences,

[1] Il est aisé d'aller à pied, quand on tient son cheval par la bride.

which one only parts with exactly so long as it may please himself. No reason indeed is to be found in this comparative easiness for the not 'going afoot;' on the contrary, it may be a most profitable exercise; but every reason for not esteeming the doing so too highly, nor setting it on a level with the toiling upon foot of him, who has no horse to fall back on at whatever moment he may please.

There is, and always must be, some rough work to be done in the world; work which, though rough, is not therefore in the least ignoble; and the schemes, so daintily conceived, of a luxurious society, which repose on a tacit assumption that nobody shall have to do this work, are judged with a fine irony in this Arabic proverb: *If I am master, and thou art master, who shall drive the asses?*[1] The following proverb is, or rather used to be, current among the slave population of St. Domingo, who ridiculed with it the ambition and pretension of the mulatto race immediately above them. These, in imitation of the French planters, must have their duels too—duels, however, which had nothing earnest or serious about

[1] The Gallegan proverb, *You a lady, I a lady, who shall drive the hogs a-field?* (Vos dona, yo dona, quen botara a porca fora?) is only a variation of this; and so too our own: *I stout and you stout, who will carry the dirt out?* It need not be said that 'stout' here is equivalent to proud.

them, invariably ending in a reconciliation and a feast, the kids which furnished the latter being in fact the only sufferers, their blood the only blood which was shed. All this the proverb uttered: *Mulattoes fight, kids die.*[1]

And proverbs, witty in themselves, often become wittier still in their application, like gems that acquire new brilliancy from their setting, or from some novel light in which they are held. No writer that I know has a happier skill in thus adding wit to the witty than Fuller, the Church historian. One or two examples drawn from his writings will shew this. He is describing the indignation, the outcries, the remonstrances, which the multiplied extortions, the intolerable exactions of the Papal See gave birth to in England during the reigns of such subservient kings as our Third Henry; yet he will not have his readers to suppose that the Popes fared a whit the worse for all this outcry which was raised against them; not so, for *The fox thrives best when he is most cursed*;[2] the very loudness of the clamour was itself rather an evidence how well they were faring. Or again, he is telling of that Duke of Buck-

[1] Mulates qua battent, cabrites qua morts.

[2] A proverb of many tongues beside our own: thus in the Italian: Quanto più la volpe è maladetta, tanto maggior preda fa.

ingham, well known to us through Shakspeare's *Richard the Third*, who, having helped the tyrant to a throne, afterwards took mortal displeasure against him; this displeasure he sought to hide, in the deep of his heart, till a season should arrive for showing it with effect; but in vain; for, as Fuller observes, *It is hard to halt before a cripple*; the arch-hypocrite Richard, he to whom dissembling was as a second nature, saw through and detected at once the shallow Buckingham's clumsier deceit. And the *Church History* abounds with similar happy applications. Fuller, indeed, possesses so much of the wit out of which proverbs spring, that not seldom it is difficult to tell whether he is adducing a proverb, or uttering some proverb-like saying of his own, destined to become such, or at all events abundantly deserving so to do. Thus, I cannot remember ever to have met any of the following, which yet sound like proverbs—the first on solitude as preferable to ill fellowship: *Better ride alone than have a thief's company*;[1] the second against certain who disparaged one whose excellencies they would have found it very difficult to imitate: *They who complain that Grantham steeple stands awry, will not set a straighter by it*,[2] while in another he warns against despising in

[1] *Holy State*, iii. 5.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 23.

any the tokens of honourable toil: *Mock not a cobbler for his black thumbs.*[1]

But the glory of proverbs, that, perhaps, which strikes us most often and most forcibly about them, is their shrewd common sense, the sound wisdom for the management of our own lives, or the management of our intercourse with our fellows, which so many of them contain. In truth, there is no region of practical life which they do not occupy, for which they do not supply some wise hints and counsels and warnings. There is hardly a mistake which in the course of our lives we have committed, but some proverb, had we known and attended to its lesson, might have saved us from it. 'Adages' indeed, according to the more probable etymology of that word, they are, *apt for action* and use.[2]

Thus, how many of these popular sayings there are on the prudent governing the tongue, —I speak not now of those urging the *duty*, though such are by no means wanting,—but the wisdom and advantage of knowing how to keep silence as well as how to speak. The Persian is no doubt familiar to us all: *Speech is silvern, silence is golden*; with which we may

[1] *Holy State*, b. iii. c. 2.

[2] Adagia, ad agendum apta; this is the etymology of the word given by Festus.

compare the Italian; *Who speaks, sows; who keeps silence, reaps*;[1] and on the *safety* that is in silence, I know none happier than another from the same quarter, and one most truly characteristic of Italian caution: *Silence was never written down*;[2] while, on the other hand, we are excellently warned of the irrevocable nature of the word which has once gone from us in this Eastern proverb: *Of thy word unspoken thou art master; thy spoken word is master of thee*; even as the same is set out elsewhere by many striking comparisons; it is the arrow from the bow, the stone from the sling; and, once launched, can as little be recalled as these.[3] Our own, *He who says what he likes, shall hear what he does not like*, gives a further motive for self-government in speech; while this Spanish is in a higher strain: *The evil which issues from thy mouth falls into thy bosom.*[4] Nor is it enough to abstain ourselves from all such rash or sinful words; we must not make ourselves partakers in those of others; which it is only too easy to do; for, as the Chinese have said

[1] Chi parla semina, chi tace raccoglie; compare the Swedish: Bättre tyga än illa tala (Better silence than ill speech).

[2] Il tacer non fu mai scritto.

[3] Palabra de boca, piedra de honda.—Palabra y piedra suelta no tiene vuelta.

[4] El mal que de tu boca sale, en tu seno se cae.

very well: *He who laughs at an impertinence, makes himself its accomplice.*

And then, in proverbs not a few what profitable warnings have we against the fruits of evil companionship, as in that homely one of our own: *He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas,* which I fancy we have borrowed from the Spaniards;[1] or, again, in the old Hebrew one: *Two dry sticks will set on fire one green*; or, in another from the East, which repeats the same caution, and plainly shows whither such companionship will lead: *He that takes the raven for a guide, shall light upon carrion.*

What warnings do many contain against unreasonable expectations, against a looking for perfection in a world of imperfection, and generally a demanding of more from life than life can yield. *We* note very well the folly of one addicted to this, saying: *He expects better bread than can be made of wheat*; and the Portuguese: *He that will have a horse without fault, let him go afoot*; and the French: *Where the goat is tied, there she must browse.*[2] Again, what a good word of caution on the wisdom of considering oftentimes a step which, being once taken, is taken for ever, lies in the following

[1] Quien con perros se echa, con pulgas se levanta.

[2] Là ou la chèvre est attachée, il faut qu'elle broute.

Russian proverb: *Measure thy cloth ten times; thou canst cut it but once.* And in this Spanish the final issues of procrastination are well set forth: *By the street of 'By-and-bye' one arrives at the house of 'Never.'*[1] How pleasantly a wise discretion which shall avoid all appearance of evil is urged in this Chinese proverb: *In a field of melons tie not thy shoe; under a plum-tree adjust not thy cap.* And this Danish warns us well against relying too much on other men's continence in speech, since there is no rarer gift than the capacity of keeping a secret: *Tell nothing to thy friend which thine enemy may not know.* Here is a word which we owe to Italy, and which, laid to heart, might go far to keep men out of lawsuits, or, being entangled in them, from refusing to accept tolerable terms of accommodation: *The robes of lawyers are lined with the obstinacy of suitors.*[2] Other words of wisdom and warning, for so I must esteem them, are these; this, on the danger of being overset by prosperity: *Everything may be borne, except good fortune*;[3] with which may be compared our own: *Bear wealth, poverty will bear itself*; and another of our own, *It is hard to lift*

[1] Por la calle de despues se va á la casa de nunca.

[2] Le vesti degli avvocati sono fodrate dell' ostinazion dei litiganti.

[3] Ogni cosa si sopporta, eccetto il buon tempo.

a full cup without spilling; and another Italian which says: *In prosperity no altars smoke.*[1] This is on the exposure which will sooner or later follow upon dressing ourselves out in intellectual finery that does not belong to us: *Who arrays himself in other men's garments, is stripped in the middle of the street*;[2] he is detected and laid bare under conditions which make detection the most shameful.

Of the same miscellaneous character, and derived from quarters the most diverse, but all of them of an excellent sense or shrewdness, are the following. This is from Italy: *Who sees not the bottom, let him not pass the water.*[3] This is current among the free blacks of Hayti: *Before fording the river, do not curse mother alligator*;[4] that is, provoke not wantonly those in whose power you presently may be. This is Spanish: *Call me not 'olive,' till you see me gathered*;[5] being nearly parallel to our own: *Praise a fair day at night.* The following is French: *Take*

[1] Nella prosperità non fumano gli altari.

[2] Quien con ropa agena se viste, en la calle se queda en cueros.

[3] Chi non vede il fondo, non passi l'acqua.

[4] Avant traversé rivier, pas juré maman caiman. This and one or two other Haytian proverbs quoted in this volume I have derived from a curious article, *Les mœurs et la littérature nègres*, by Gustave D'Alaux, in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15 mai, 1852.

[5] No me digas oliva, hasta que me veas cogida.

the first advice of a woman, and not the second;[1] a proverb of much wisdom; for in processes of reasoning, out of which the second counsels spring, women may and will be inferior to us; but in intuitions, in moral intuitions above all, they surpass us far; they have what Montaigne ascribes to them in a remarkable word, 'l'esprit *primesautier*,' the leopard's spring, which takes its prey, if it take it at all, at the first spring.

And I must needs think that for as many as are seeking diligently to improve their time and opportunities of knowledge, with at the same time little of either which they can call their own, a very useful hint and warning against an error which lies very near, is contained in the brief Latin proverb: *Compendia, dispendia.* Nor indeed for them only, but for all, and in numberless aspects, it continually proves true that a short cut may be a very long way home; yet the proverb can never be better applied than to those little catechisms of science, those skeleton outlines of history, those epitomes of all useful information, those thousand delusive short cuts to the attainment of that knowledge, which can indeed only be acquired by them that are content to travel on the king's highway, on the old, and as I must still call it, the royal road of patience, perseverance, and toil. Surely

[1] Prends le premier conseil d'une femme, et non le second.

these *compendia*, so meagre and so hungry, with little food for the intellect, with less for the affections or the imagination, barren catalogues of facts, bones with no flesh adhering to them, we may style with fullest right *dispendia*, wasteful as they generally prove of whatever time and labour and money is bestowed upon them; and every true scholar will set his seal to this word, as wisely as it is grandly spoken: 'All spacious minds, attended with the felicities of means and leisure, will fly abridgements as bane.'[1]

And being on the subject of books and the choice of books, let me put before you a proverb, and in this reading age a very serious one; it comes to us from Italy, from whence so many bad books have come, and it says: *There is no worse robber than a bad book.*[2] Indeed, none worse, perhaps none so bad; other robbers may spoil us of our money; but this robber of our 'goods'—of our time at any rate, even assuming the book to be only nega-

[1] Bacon (*Advancement of Learning*) has not expressed himself less strongly: 'As for the corruptions and moths of history, which are epitomes, the use of them deserveth to be banished, as all men of sound judgement have confessed, as those that have fretted and corroded the sound bodies of many excellent histories, and wrought them into base and unprofitable dregs.'—And again in his *Essays*: 'Distilled books are like women's distilled waters, flashy things.'

[2] Non v' è il peggior ladro d'un cattivo libro.

tively bad; but of how much more, of our principles, our faith, our purity of heart, supposing its badness to be positive, and not negative only. What a cleaving stain on the memory and the imagination an unholy book may leave. One proverb more on books may fitly find place here: *Dead men open living men's eyes*; I take it to contain implicitly the praise of history, or perhaps rather of biography, and an announcement of the instruction which a faithful record of those who have long passed away may yield us.[1]

Here are one or two prudent words on education. *A child may have too much of its mother's blessing*; yes, for that *blessing* may be no blessing at all, but rather a curse, if it take the shape of foolish and fond indulgence; and in the same strain is this German: *Better the child weep than the father.*[2] And this, like many others, is found in so many tongues, that it can hardly be ascribed to one rather than another: *More springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed.*[3] It is a proverb for many, but most of all for parents and teachers, that they lap not themselves in a false dream of

[1] Los muertos abren los ojos á los vivos.

[2] Es ist besser, das Kind weine denn der Vater. Compare the Scotch proverb, *Better bairns greet than bearded men.*

[3] Nace en la huerta lo que no siembra el hortelano.

security, as though nothing was at work or growing in the minds of the young under their guardianship, but what they themselves had sown there, as though there was not another who might very well have sown his tares beside and among any good seed of their sowing. At the same time the proverb has also its happier side. There may be, there often are, better things also in this garden than ever the earthly gardener set there, seeds of the more immediate sowing of God. In either of these aspects this proverb deserves to be laid to heart.

Proverbs will sometimes outrun and implicitly anticipate conclusions, which are only after long struggles and efforts arrived at as the formal and undoubted conviction of all thoughtful men. After how long a conflict has that been established as a maxim in political economy, which the brief Italian proverb long ago announced: *Gold's worth is gold.*[1] What millions upon millions of national wealth have been as much lost as if they had been thrown into the sea, from the inability of those who have had the destinies of nations in their hands to grasp this simple proposition, that everything which could purchase money, or which money would fain purchase, is as really wealth as the money itself. What forcing of national

[1] Oro è, che oro vale.

industries into unnatural channels has resulted from this, what mischievous restrictions in the buying and selling of one people with another. Nay, can the truth which this proverb affirms be said even now to be accepted without gainsaying, so long as the talk about the balance of trade being in favour of or against a nation, as the fear of draining a country of its gold, still survive?

Here is a proverb of many tongues: *One sword keeps another in its scabbard*;[1]—surely a far wiser and far manlier word than the puling yet mischievous babble of our shallow Peace Societies, which, while they fancy that they embody, and they only embody, the true spirit of Christianity, proclaim themselves in fact ignorant of all which it teaches; for they dream of having peace the fruit, while at the same time 'the root of bitterness' out of which have grown all the wars and fightings that have ever been in the world, namely the lusts which stir in men's members, remains strong and vigorous as ever. But no; it is not they that are the peacemakers. In the face of an evil world, and of a world determined to continue in its evil, *He who bears the sword*, and he who though he fain would leave it in the

[1] Una spada tien l' altra nel fodro.

scabbard yet will not shrink, if need be, from drawing it, *he bears peace.*[1]

A remarkable feature of a good proverb is the immense variety of applications which it will admit, which indeed it challenges and invites. Not lying on the surface of things, but going deep down to their heart, it will prove capable of being applied again and again, under circumstances the most different. Like the gift of which Solomon spake, 'whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth;' or like a diamond cut and polished upon many sides, it reflects and refracts the light upon every one. There can be no greater mistake than the attempt to tie it down and restrict it to a single application, when indeed the very character of it is that it is ever finding or making new ones for itself.

It is nothing strange that with words of Eternal Wisdom this should be so, and in respect of them my assertion cannot need a proof. I will, notwithstanding, adduce as a first confirmation of it a scriptural proverb, one which fell from the Lord's lips in his last prophecies about Jerusalem: *Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together* (Matt. xxiv. 28); and which probably He had taken up from Job (xxxix. 30). Who would venture to affirm that he had exhausted the

[1] Qui porte épée, porte paix.

meaning of this wonderful saying? For is it not properly inexhaustible? All history is a comment on these words. Wherever there is a Church or a people abandoned by the spirit of life, and so a carcase, tainting the atmosphere of God's moral world, around it assemble the ministers and messengers of Divine justice, 'the eagles,' (or vultures more strictly, for the eagle does not feed on aught but what itself has slain,) the scavengers of God's moral world; scenting out as by a mysterious instinct the prey from afar, and charged to remove presently the offence out of the way. This proverb, for the saying has passed upon the lips of men, and thus has become such, is being fulfilled evermore. The wicked Canaanites were the carcase, when the children of Israel entered into their land, the commissioned eagles that should remove them out of sight. At a later day the Jews were themselves the carcase, and the Romans the eagles; and when in the progress of decay, the Roman empire had quite lost the spirit of life, reverence for law, and those virtues of the family and the nation which had deservedly made it great, the northern races, the eagles now, came down upon it, to tear it limb from limb, and make room for a new creation that should grow up in its stead. Again, the Persian

empire was the carcase; Alexander and his Macedonian hosts, the eagles that by unerring instinct gathered round it to complete its doom. The Greek Church in the seventh century was too nearly a carcase to escape the destiny of such, and the armies of Islam scented their prey, and divided it among them. In modern times it can hardly, I fear, be denied that Poland was such a carcase; and this one may affirm without in the least extenuating their guilt who partitioned it; for it might have been just for it to suffer, what yet it was most unrighteous for others to inflict. Nay, where do you not find an illustration of this proverb, from such instances on the largest scale as these, down to that of the silly and profligate heir, surrounded by sharpers and black-legs and usurers, and preyed on by these? Everywhere it is true that *Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

Or, again, consider that proverb as familiar as it is brief: *Extremes meet.* Brief as it is, it is yet a motto on which a volume might be written, which is finding its illustration every day,—in small and in great,—in things trivial and in things most important,—in the histories of single men, and in those of nations and of Churches. Consider some of its every-day fulfilments,—old age ending in second childhood,

—cold performing the effects of heat, and scorching as heat would have done,—the extremities alike of joy and of grief finding utterance in tears,—that which is above all value declared to have no value at all, to be 'invaluable,'—the second singular 'thou' instead of the plural 'you,' employed in so many languages to inferiors and to God, never to equals; just as servants and children are alike called by the Christian name, but not those who stand in the midway of intimacy between them. Or to take some further illustrations from the moral world, of extremes meeting; observe how often those who begin their lives as spendthrifts end them as misers; how often the flatterer and the calumniator meet in the same person: out of a sense of which the Italians say well: *Who paints me before, smudges me behind*;[1] observe how those who yesterday would have sacrificed to Paul as a god, will to-day stone him as a malefactor (Acts xiv. 18, 19; cf. xxviii. 4–6); even as Roman emperors would one day have blasphemous honours paid to them by the populace, and the next their bodies would be dragged by a hook

[1] Chi dinanzi mi pinge, di dietro mi tinge. The history of the word 'sycophant,' and the manner in which it has travelled from its original to its present meaning, is a very striking confirmation of this proverb's truth.

through the streets of the city, to be flung into the common sewer. Or note again in what close alliance hardness and softness, cruelty and self-indulgence ('lust hard by hate'), are continually found; or in law, how the *summum jus*, where unredressed by equity, becomes the *summa injuria*, as in the case of Shylock's pound of flesh, which was indeed no more than was in the bond. Or observe, on a greater scale, the inner affinities between a democracy and a tyranny.[1] Or read thoughtfully the history of the Church and of the sects, and you will not fail to note what things apparently the most remote are yet in the most fearful proximity with one another: how often, for example, a false asceticism has issued in frantic outbreaks of fleshly lusts, and those who avowed themselves at one time ambitious to live lives above angels, have ended in living lives below beasts. Again, take note of England at the Restoration exchanging all in a moment the sour strictness of the Puritans for a licence and debauchery unknown to it before. Or, once more, consider the exactly similar position in respect of Scripture, taken up by the Romanists on the one side, the Quakers and Familists on the other. Seeming, and in much being, so remote from one another, they yet have this funda-

[1] These Plato has wonderfully traced, *Rep.* ii. 217.

mental in common, that Scripture, insufficient in itself, needs a supplement from without, those finding it in a Pope, and these in the 'inward light.'[1]. With these examples before you, not to speak of the many others which might be adduced,[2] you will own, I think, that this proverb, *Extremes meet*, or its parallel, *Too far East is West*, reaches very far into the heart of things; and with this for the present I must conclude.

[1] See Jeremy Taylor, *Dissuasive from Popery*, part ii. b. i. sect. 11, § 6.

[2] '*Extremes meet.* Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as *so* true, that they lose all the power of truths, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.'—COLERIDGE, *Aids to Reflection*.

LECTURE V.

THE MORALITY OF PROVERBS.

WHETHER I would or not, I have been obliged to touch already on the morality of proverbs. The subject of necessity has offered itself to us continually, in one shape or another; yet hitherto we have rather cast side-glances upon it, than set it before us as a distinct subject for consideration. To it I propose to devote the present lecture. But how, it may be asked at the outset, can any general verdict be pronounced about them? In a family like theirs, so vast in numbers, spread so widely over the face of the earth, must there not be found worthy members and unworthy, proverbs noble and base, holy and profane, heavenly and earthly;—yea, heavenly, earthly, and devilish? How can they be judged together, and, so to speak, in a mass? What common verdict of praise or censure can be pronounced upon them all? Evidently none. The only question, therefore, for our consideration must be, whether there exists any such large and unquestionable

excess either of the better sort or of the worse, as shall give us a right to pronounce a judgment on the whole in their favour or against them, to affirm of them that their preponderating influence and weight is thrown into the balance of the good or of the evil.

And here I am persuaded that no one can have devoted serious attention to this aspect of the subject, but will own (and seeing how greatly popular morals are affected by popular proverbs, will own with thankfulness), that in the main they range themselves under the banners of the right and of the truth. Not denying that there are numerous exceptions, he will yet acknowledge that of so many as move in an ethical sphere at all, far more are children of light and the day than of darkness and the night. Indeed, the comparative paucity of unworthy proverbs is a very noticeable fact, and one to the causes of which I shall presently recur.

At the same time, affirming this, I find it necessary to make certain explanations, to draw certain distinctions. In the first place, I would not in the least deny that a very large company of coarse proverbs are extant. It needs only to turn over a page or two of Ray's *Collection of English Proverbs*, or of Howell's, or indeed of any collection in almost any tongue,

which has not been weeded carefully, to convince oneself of this. Nor are they extant only, but, some at least, living on the lips of men. Having their birth, for the most part, in a period of a nation's literature and life, when men are much more plain-spoken, and have far fewer reticences than is afterwards the case, it is nothing strange that some of them, employing words forbidden now, but not forbidden then, should sound coarse and indelicate in our ears: while indeed there are others, whose offence and grossness these considerations, while they may mitigate, are quite insufficient to excuse. But at the same time, gross words and images (I speak not of wanton ones), bad as they may be, are altogether of a different character from immoral maxims and rules of life. And it is these immoral maxims, unrighteous, selfish, or otherwise unworthy rules, of which I would affirm the number to be, if not absolutely, yet relatively small.

And then further, in estimating the morality of proverbs, this also will claim in justice not to be forgotten. In the same manner as coarse proverbs are not necessarily immoral, but may be quite the contrary, so the application which is made of a proverb by us may very often be hardhearted and selfish, while yet the proverb itself is very far from so being. This selfish-

ness and hardness may not lie in it of primary intention, but only in our abuse; and not seldom these two things, the proverb itself, and the ordinary employment of it, will demand to be kept carefully asunder. *He has made his bed, and now he must lie on it;—As he has brewed, so he must drink;—As he has sown, so must he reap*;[1]—if these are employed to justify our refusal to save others, so far as we may, from the consequences of their own folly and imprudence, or even guilt, why then one can only say that they are very ill employed; and there are few of us with whom it would not have fared hardly, had all those about us acted in the spirit of these proverbs so misinterpreted; had they refused to mitigate for us, so far as they could, the consequences of our errors. But if the words are taken in their true sense, as homely announcements of that law of divine retaliations in the world, according to which men shall eat of the fruit of their own doings, and be filled with their own ways, who shall gainsay them? What do they affirm more than every page of Scripture, every turn of human life, is affirming too; namely, that the everlasting order of God's universe cannot be

[1] They have for their Latin equivalents such as these: Colo quod aptâsti, ipsi tibi nendum est.—Qui vinum bibit, fæcem bibat.—Ut sementem feceris, ita metes.

violated with impunity, that there is a continual returning upon men of what they have done, and that oftentimes in their history their judgment may be read?

Charity begins at home is the most obvious and familiar of these proverbs, selfishly abused. It may be, no doubt it often is, made the plea for a selfish withholding of assistance from all but a few, whom men may include in their 'at home,' while sometimes it receives a narrower interpretation still; and self, and self only, is accounted to be 'at home.' And yet, in truth, what were that charity worth, which did *not* begin at home, which did *not* preserve the divine order and proportion and degree? It is not for nothing that we have been grouped in families, neighbourhoods, and nations; and he who will not recognize the divinely appointed nearnesses to himself of some over others, who thinks to be a cosmopolite without being a patriot, a philanthropist without owning a distinguishing love for them that are peculiarly 'his own,' who would thus have a circumference without a centre, deceives his own heart; and affirming all men to be equally dear to him, is indeed affirming all to be equally indifferent. Home, the family, this is as the hearth at which the affections which are afterwards to go forth and warm in a larger circle, are themselves to

be kept lively and warm; and the charity which did not exercise itself in outcomings of kindness and love in the narrower, would be little likely to seek a wider range of action for itself. Wherever else charity may *end*, and the larger the sphere which it makes for itself the better, it must yet *begin* at home.[1]

There are, again, proverbs which, from another point of view, might seem of an ignoble cast, and as calculated to lower the tone of morality among those who received them; proposing as they do secondary, and therefore, unworthy, motives to actions, which ought to be performed out of the highest. I mean such as this: *Honesty is the best policy*; wherein honesty is commended, not because it is right, but because it is most prudent and politic, and has the promise of this present world. Now doubtless there are proverbs not a few which, like this, move in the region of what has been by Coleridge so well called 'prudential morality;' and did we accept them as containing the whole circle of motives to honesty or other right conduct, nothing could be worse, or better fitted to lower the moral standard of our lives.

[1] Concerning other proverbs, such as the following, Tunica pallio propior, Frons occipitio prior; I have more doubt. The misuse lies nearer; the selfishness may very probably be in the proverb itself, and not in our application of it; though even these are not incapable of a fair interpretation.

He who resolves to be honest because, and only because, it is *the best policy*, will be little likely long to continue honest at all. But the proverb does not pretend to usurp the place of an ethical rule; it does not presume to cast down the higher law which should determine to honesty and uprightness, that it may put itself in its place; it only declares that honesty, let alone that it is the right thing, is also, even for this present world, the wisest. Nor dare we, let me further add, despise prudential morality, such as is embodied in sayings like this. The motives which it suggests are helps to a weak and tempted virtue, may prove more useful assistances to it in some passing moment of a violent temptation, however little they can be regarded as able to make men *for a continuance* even outwardly upright and just.

And once more, proverbs are not to be accounted selfish, which announce selfishness; unless they do it, either avowedly recommending it as a rule and maxim of life, or, if not so, yet with an evident complacency and satisfaction in the announcement which they make, and in this more covert and perhaps still more mischievous way, taking part with the evil which they proclaim. There are many proverbs, which a lover of his race would be very thankful if there had been nothing in the world to justify

or to provoke, if, in fact, they had no right to exist; for the convictions they embody, the experiences on which they rest, are very far from complimentary to human nature: but seeing they express that which is, it would be idle to wish them away, to wish that this evil had not found its utterance. Nay, it is much better that it should have embodied itself in words; for thus taking form and shape, and being brought directly under notice, it may be better watched against and avoided. Such proverbs, not selfish, but rather detecting selfishness and laying it bare, are the following; this Russian, on the only too slight degree in which we are touched with other men's troubles: *The burden is light on the shoulders of another*; with which the French may be compared: *One has always enough strength to bear the misfortunes of one's friends.*[1] Such is this Italian: *Every one draws the water to his own mill*;[2] or as it appears in its eastern shape, which calls up the desert-bivouac before one's eyes: *Every one rakes the embers to his own cake.* Such this Latin, on the comparative wastefulness wherewith that which is another's is

[1] On a toujours assez de force pour supporter le malheur de ses amis. I confess this sounds to me rather like an imitation of Rochefoucault than a genuine proverb.

[2] Ognun tira l'acqua al suo molino.

too often used: *Men cut broad thongs from other men's leather*;[1] with many more of the same character, which it would be only too easy to bring together.

With all this, I would not in the least deny that immoral proverbs, and only too many of them, exist. For if proverbs are, as we have recognized them to be, a genuine transcript of what is stirring in the hearts of men, then, since there is cowardice, untruth, selfishness, unholiness, profaneness there, how should these be wanting here? The world is not so consummate a hypocrite as the entire absence of all immoral proverbs would imply. There will be merely selfish ones, as our own: *Every one for himself, and God for us all*; or as this Dutch: *Self's the man*;[2] or as the French, more shamelessly cynical still: *Better a grape for me, than two figs for thee*;[3] or again, such as proclaim a doubt and disbelief in the existence of any high moral integrity anywhere, as *Every man has his price*; or assume that poor men can scarcely be honest, as *It is hard for an empty sack to stand straight*; or take it for granted that every man would cheat every other if he could, as the French: *Count after*

[1] Ex alieno tergore lata secantur lora.

[2] Zelf is de Man.

[3] J'aime mieux un raisin pour moi que deux figues pour toi.

your father;[1] or, if they do not actually 'speak good of the covetous,' yet assume it possible that a blessing can wait on that which a wicked covetousness has heaped together, as the Spanish: *Blessed is the son, whose father went to the devil*; or find cloaks and apologies for sin, as the German: *Once is never*;[2] or such as would imply that the evil of a sin lies not in its sinfulness, but in the outward disgrace annexed to it, as the Italian: *A sin concealed is half forgiven.*[3] Or again there will be proverbs dastardly and base, as the Spanish maxim of caution, *Draw the snake from its hole by another man's hand*; put, that is, another, and it may be for your own profit, to the peril from which you shrink yourself;—or more dastardly still, 'scoundrel maxims,' an old English poet has called them; as that which is acted on only too

[1] Comptez après votre père. Compare the Spanish: Entre dos amigos un notario y dos testigos.

[2] Einmal, keinmal. This proverb, with which we may compare a French one, On peut user une fois l'an de sa conscience, was turned to such bad uses, that a German divine thought it necessary to write a treatise against it. There exist indeed several old works in German with such titles as the following, *Ungodly Proverbs and their Refutation.* Nor is it for nothing that Jeremy Taylor in one place gives this warning: 'Be curious to avoid all proverbs and propositions, or odd sayings, by which evil life is encouraged, and the hands of the spirit weakened.' In like manner Chrysostom (*Hom.* 73 *in Matt.*) denounces the Greek proverb: γλυκὺ ἤτω καὶ πνιξάτω.

[3] Peccato celato, mezzo perdonato.

often: *One must howl with the wolves*;[1] in other words, when a general cry is raised against any, it is safest to join it, lest we be supposed to sympathize with its object; safest to howl *with* the wolves, if one would not be hunted *by* them. In the whole circle of proverbs there is scarcely a baser, or more dastardly than this; and yet who will say that he has never traced in himself the cowardly temptation to obey it? Besides these there will be, of which I shall spare you any examples, proverbs wanton and impure; and not merely proverbs thus earthly and sensual, but others devilish; such as those Italian on revenge which I quoted in my third lecture.

Then too, there are proverbs about which it is difficult to determine whether they ought to be included in this catalogue of immoral proverbs or not; and which, doubtless, if put on their defence, would have much to say for themselves, while yet they can hardly escape this charge altogether. I refer to those which embody, deepen, and propagate unfavourable judgements about whole classes of men, judgements which at the worst can be true only of some, and must often be exaggerated even in respect of

[1] Badly turned into a rhyming pentameter:

Consonus esto lupis, cum quibus esse cupis.

these. Take for example, the proverbs about the villain or peasant—I have referred to them already—in almost all the languages of modern Europe. They are in themselves exceedingly curious, furnishing as they do a descending scale from the expression of a slight contempt for his clownishness and unmannerly ways to that of intensest scorn for the servility, greediness, ingratitude, knavery, and ill conditions of every kind which are freely credited to him. They abundantly explain how in some languages, in our own for example, whatever is worst and wickedest comes in the end to be bound up in the 'villain's' name. But whatever may have been his faults, we may be quite sure that they are caricatured and exaggerated here; that this army of hostile proverbs, all directed against him, represent in good part the passions and prejudices of the aristocratic and middle classes; these, as we cannot doubt, continually finding in these hard sayings about the peasant, a justification of their dislike, and an excuse for their treatment of him. In this sense these proverbs, with any others conceived in the same spirit, must be owned to have wrought for ill.[1]

[1] One is embarrassed with the multitude of these in which this scorn or hatred of the 'villain' utters itself. Torriano has thirty Italian proverbs under 'villano;' they are almost every

But for all this these immoral proverbs, rank weeds among the wholesome corn, are comparatively rare. In the minority with all people, they are very much indeed in the minority with most. The fact is not a little worthy of note. Surely there lies in it a solemn testimony, that however men may and do in their conduct continually violate the rule of right, yet these violations are ever felt to be such, are inwardly confessed not to be the law of man's life, but transgressions of the law; and thus, stricken as with a secret shame, and paying an

one conceived in this spirit. These may serve as specimens: Al villano, se gli porge il dito, e' prende la mano.—Chi vuol castigar un villano, lo dia da castigar ad un altro villano.—Il villan, gettata la pietra, nasconde la man.—Fa ben al villano e' ti vuol mal; fagli mal, e' ti vuol bene.—Ponge il villano chi l'onge, e onge chi lo ponge [so the medieval Latin proverb: Ungentem pungit, pungentem rusticus ungit]; but Wander has 405 proverbs under 'Bauer;' of these quite the larger number are utterances of the same character; here are half a dozen almost taken at random: Der Bauer and sein Stier sind Ein Thier.—Wer einem Bauer aus dem Koth hilft, hat ebenso viel Dank, als der ihm hineingestossen hat.—Ein Bauer gibt kein gutes Wort, als wenn er gewinnen oder betrügen will.—Wenn der Bauer ein Edelmann wird, sterben ihm alle Freunde.—Wenn sich die Bauern tief bücken, haben sie den Teufel im Rücken.—Der Bauer ist nicht zu verderben, man hau' ihm denn Hand und Fuss ab. There are many proverbs in French which tell the same tale, see *Le Livre des Proverbes Français* by Le Roux de Lincy, vol. ii. pp. 80–83, and I believe in every other modern literature of Europe. Abundance too in medieval Latin; but let one, a very detestable one, suffice: Rustica gens est optima flens, et pessima ridens.

unconscious homage to the majesty of goodness, do not presume to raise themselves into maxims, nor, for all the allowance which they find, pretend to claim recognition as abiding standards of action.

As the sphere in which the proverb moves is no imaginary world, but that actual and often very homely world which is round us and about us; as it does not float in the clouds, but sets its feet firmly on this common earth of ours from which originally it sprung, being occupied with present needs and every-day cares, it is only natural that proverbs about money should be numerous;[1] and in the main it would be well if the practice of the world rose to the height of its convictions as expressed in these. Frugality is connected with so many virtues—at least, its contrary makes so many impossible—that the numerous proverbial maxims inculcating this, and none are more frequent on the lips of men, must be regarded as belonging to the better order;[2] above all when taken with the

[1] In Wander's *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexicon* (see back, p. 69), there are 1420 proverbs under 'Geld,' that is, proverbs in which this is the principal word, and it is manifest that these cannot at all exhaust the proverbs having to do with money. Thus 'Gold' yields more than 200 more.

[2] There are a few inculcating an opposite lesson: this is one: *Spend, and God will send*; which Howell glosses well; 'yes, a bag and a wallet.'

check of others, which forbid this frugality from degenerating into a sordid and dishonourable parsimony; such, I mean, as our own: *The groat is ill saved which shames its master.* In how many the conviction speaks out that the hastily-gotten will hardly be honestly-gotten, that 'he who makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent,' as when the Spaniards say: *He who will be rich in a year, at the half-year they hang him*;[1] in how many others, the confidence that the ill-won will also be the ill-spent, that in one way or another it shall have no continuance,[2] that he who shuts up unlawful gain in his storehouses, is shutting up a fire that will one day destroy them. Very solemn and weighty in this sense is the German proverb: *The unrighteous penny eats up the righteous pound*;[3] and the Spanish, too, is striking: *That which is another's always yearns for its lord*;[4] it yearns, that is, to be gone and get to its rightful owner. In how many the conviction is expressed that this mammon, which more than anything else men are tempted to imagine God does not concern Himself about, is yet given

[1] Quien en un año quiere ser rico, al medio le ahorcan.

[2] Male parta male dilabuntur.—Wie gewonnen, so zerronnen. Compare Euripides, *Elect.* 948:

'Ο δ' ὄλβος ἄδικος καὶ μετὰ σκαιῶν ξυνὼν
ἐξέπτατ' οἴκων, σμικρὸν ἀνθήσας χρόνον.

[3] Ungerechter Pfennig verzehrt gerechten Thaler.

[4] Lo ageno siempre pia por su dueño.

and taken away by Him according to the laws of his righteousness; given sometimes to his enemies and for their sorer punishment, that under its fatal influence they may grow worse and worse, for *The more the carle riches, he wretches*; but oftener withdrawn, because no due acknowledgment of Him was made in its use; as when the German proverb declares: *Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor*;[1] and our own, *Covetousness bursts the bag*; and the Danish: *Give alms, that thy children may not ask them*; and the Talmud, with a yet deeper significance: *Alms are the salt of riches*; the true antiseptic, which shall prevent these from themselves corrupting, and from corrupting those that have them.[2]

At the same time, as it is the very character

[1] Der Geiz sammlet sich arm, die Milde giebt sich reich. In the sense of the latter half of this proverb *we* say, *The charitable gives out at the door, and God puts in at the window*; and again, *Drawn wells are seldom dry*; though this last is capable of a far wider application.

[2] A Latin proverb on the moral cowardice which it is the character of riches to generate, Timidus Plutus, says more briefly what Wordsworth has said more at large in one of his noblest sonnets, written in prospect of the invasion and ending with these words:

'riches are akin
To fear, to change, to cowardice, and death.'

Compare Euripides:

Δειλόν θ' ὁ πλοῦτος καὶ φιλόψυχον κακόν.

of proverbs to look at matters all round and from every side, there are others to remind us that even this very giving itself shall be with forethought and discretion; with selection of right objects, and in right proportion to each. The Greeks, who never lost sight of measure and proportion, taught us this when they said, *Sow with the hand, and not with the whole sack*;[1] for as it fares with the seed-corn, which, if it shall prosper, must be providently dispersed with the hand, not prodigally shaken from the sack's mouth, so must it be with benefits which shall do good either to those who impart or to those who receive them; for there is an art in giving as in everything else.[2] Thus again, there is a Danish which says, *So give to-day, that thou shalt be able to give to-morrow;* and another: *So give to one, that thou shalt have to give to another.*[3] And take these two as

[1] Τῇ χειρὶ δεῖ σπείρειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὅλῳ τῷ θυλάκῳ. Plutarch affords here an instructive example of the manifold applications whereof a proverb may be capable. Corinna, he tells us, found fault with Pindar that his poetry was not richer in mythical allusion. After a little he brought her a hymn which he had composed, and having recited the three first lines in which there were no less than five of these allusions, she stopped him, laughing and saying, *One must sow with the hand, not from the sack's mouth.*

[2] Thus Seneca: Multi sunt qui non donant, sed projiciunt.

[3] Giv saa i Dag, at du og kandst give i morgen.—Giv een at du kand give en anden.

closing the series; this Italian one first, which teaches us in a homely but striking manner, with an image Dantesque in its vigor, that 'a man shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth,' *Our last robe*, that is, our winding sheet, *is made without pockets*;[1] and then, secondly, this Russian, which, looking out beyond this present world, declares that there is that which even money is impotent to do, *Gold has wings which carry everywhere except to heaven.*

There are proverbs which contain warnings against subtle sins and temptations, such as it is only too easy to fall into. What a warning, for instance, against that most familiar temptation of looking forward to certain advantages, as increase of fortune, advance in worldly position, which may accrue to us through the death of others who now stand, or whom we fancy to stand, between us and the good that we desire, is contained in that proverb: *It is ill standing in dead men's shoes.* It is indeed ill in many ways, ill because, feeding on hope, we may abate our present industry; ill because the advantage we look for may never come; another may fill the emptied place, another inherit the coveted hoards; and ill, because the *expectation* of the event which we fancy is to give us what we wait for may so

[1] L' ultimo vestito ce lo fanno senza tasche.

easily and by such almost unmarked degrees pass into the *desire* for that event, and we before we know it, become transgressors in spirit of the sixth commandment.

Let me further invite you to observe and to admire the prevailing tone of manliness which pervades the great body of the proverbs of all nations: to take note how very few there are which would fain persuade you that 'luck is all,' or that your fortunes are in any other hands, under God, than your own. This our own proverb, *Win purple and wear purple*, proclaims. There are some, but they are quite the exceptions, to which the gambler, the loafer, the idler, the so-called 'waiter upon providence,' can appeal. For the most part they courageously accept the law of labour, *No pains, no gains,—No sweat, no sweet,—No mill, no meal*,[1] as the appointed law and condition of man's life. *Where wilt thou go, ox, that thou wilt not have to plough*?[2] is the Catalan remonstrance addressed to one, who imagines by any outward change of circumstances to evade the inevitable task and toil of existence. And this is Turkish: *It is not with saying honey, honey,*

[1] This is the English form of that worthy old classical proverb: *Φεύγων μύλον, ἅλφιτα φεύγει*, or in Latin: Qui vitat molam, vitat farinam.

[2] Ahont anirás, bou, que no llaures? I prefer this form of it to the Spanish: Adonde irá el buey, que no are?

that sweetness comes into the mouth; and to many languages another with its striking image, *Sloth, the key of poverty*,[1] belongs: while, on the other hand, there are in almost all tongues such proverbs as the following: *God helps them that help themselves*:[2] or as it appears with a slight variation in the Basque: *God is a good worker; but He loves to be helped*; or as it was current long ago in Greece: *Call Minerva to aid, but bestir thyself*.[3] And these proverbs, let me observe by the way, were not strange, in their spirit at least, to the founder of that religion which is usually supposed to inculcate a blind and indolent fatalism—however some who call themselves by his name may have forgotten the lesson which they convey. Certainly they were not strange to Mahomet himself; if the following excellently-spoken word has been rightly ascribed to him. One evening, we are told, after a weary march through the desert, he was camping with his followers, and overheard one of them saying, 'I will loose my camel, and commit it to God;' on which the prophet took,

[1] Pereza, llave de pobreza.

[2] Dii facientes adjuvant; cf. Æschylus:

Σπεύδοντι σαυτῷ χὠ θεὸς ξυνάψεται.

And again,

Εἴωθε τῷ κάμνοντι συσπεύδειν θεός.

And Sophocles:

Οὐκ ἔστι τοῖς μὴ δρῶσι σύμμαχος Τύχη.

[3] Σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ χεῖρα κίνει.

him up: 'Friend, *tie* thy camel, and commit it to God';[1] do, that is, whatever is thine to do, and then leave the issue in higher hands; but till thou hast done this, till thou hast thus helped thyself, thou hast no right to look to Heaven to help thee.

How excellently this unites genuine modesty and manly self-assertion: *Sit in your own place, and no man can make you rise*; and how good is this Spanish, on the real dignity which there often is in doing things for ourselves, rather than in standing by and suffering others to do them for us: *Who has a mouth, let him not say to another, Blow.*[2] And as a part of this which I have called the manliness of proverbs, let me especially note the lofty utterances which so many contain, summoning to a brave encountering of adverse fortune, to perseverance under disappointment and defeat and a long-continued inclemency of fate; breathing as they do a noble confidence that to the brave and bold the world will not always be adverse. *Where one door shuts another opens*;[3] this belongs to too many nations to allow of our ascribing it especially to any one. And this Latin: *The*

[1] According to the Spanish proverb: Quien bien ata, bien desata.

[2] Quien tiene boca, no diga á otro, Sopla.

[3] Donde una puerta se cierra, otra se abre.

sun of all days has not yet gone down,[1] however, in its primary application intended for those who are at the top of Fortune's wheel, to warn them that they be not high-minded, for there is yet time for many a revolution in that wheel, is equally good for those at the bottom, and as it contains warning for those, so strength and encouragement for these; for, as the Italians say: *The world is for him who has patience.*[2] And then, to pass over some of our own, so familiar that they need not be adduced, how manful a lesson is contained in this Persian proverb: *A stone that is fit for the wall, is not left in the way.* It is a saying made for them who appear for a while to be overlooked, neglected, passed by; who perceive in themselves capacities, which as yet no one else has recognized or cared to turn to account. Only *be fit for the wall*; square, polish, prepare thyself for it; do not restrict thyself to the bare acquisition of such knowledge as is absolutely necessary for thy present position; but rather learn languages, acquire useful information, stretch thyself out on this side and on that, cherishing and making the most of whatever aptitudes thou findest in thyself; and it is certain thy turn will come. Thou wilt not be *left in the way*; sooner or later the

[1] Nondum omnium dierum sol occidit.

[2] Il mondo è, di chi ha pazienza.

builders will be glad of thee; the wall will need thee to fill up a place in it, quite as much as thou needest a place to occupy in the wall. For the amount of real capacity in this world is so small, that places want persons to fill them quite as really as persons want to fill places; although, as it must be allowed, they are not always as much aware of their want.

Among these brave proverbs of which I have been speaking, I must count this Dutch one: *Money lost, nothing lost; courage lost, much lost; honour lost, more lost; soul lost, all lost.*[1] And this, Italian and Spanish, deserves here a place, *If I have lost the ring, yet the fingers are still here.*[2] In it is asserted the comparative indifference of that loss which reaches but to things external to us, so long as we ourselves remain, and are true to ourselves. *The fingers* are far more than *the ring*: if indeed those had gone, then *the man* would have been maimed; but another ring may come in place of that which has disappeared, or even with none the fingers will be fingers still, for indeed, as another Italian proverb declares, *Who has a head will not want a hat.*[3] And as at once a contrast and

[1] Goed verloren, niet verloren; moed verloren, veel verloren; eer verloren, meer verloren; ziel verloren, al verloren.

[2] Se ben ho perso l' anello, ho pur anche le dita;—Si se perdieron los anillos, aqui quedaron los dedillos.

[3] A chi ha testa, non manca cappello.

complement to this, take another, current among the free blacks of Hayti, and expressing well the little profit which there will be to a man in pieces of mere good luck, which are no true outgrowths of anything which is in him; the manner in which, having no root in himself out of which they grew, they will, as they came to him by hazard, go from him by the same: *The knife which thou hast found in the highway, thou wilt lose in the highway.*[1]

But these numerous proverbs, urging self-reliance, bidding us first to aid ourselves, if we would have Heaven to aid us, must not be dismissed without a word or two at parting. Prizing them, as we well may, and the lessons which they contain, at the highest, it will still be profitable for us always to remember that there lies very near to all these such a mischievous perversion as this: 'Aid thyself, and thou wilt need no other aid;' even as they have been sometimes, no doubt, understood in this sense. As, then, the pendant and counterweight to them all, not as unsaying what they say, but

[1] In their bastard French it runs thus: Gambette ous trouvé nen gan chimin, nen gan chimin ous va pèdè li. It may have been originally French, at any rate the French have a proverb very much to the same effect: Ce qui vient par la flûte, s'en va par le tambour; and compare the modern Greek proverb: Ἀνεμομαζώματα, δαιμονοσκορπίσματα (*What the wind gathers, the devil scatters*).

as fulfilling the other hemisphere in the complete orb of truth, let me remind you of others like the following, often quoted or alluded to by Greek and Latin authors: *The net of the sleeping (fisherman) takes*;[1]—a proverb the more interesting, that we have in the words of the Psalmist (Ps. cxxvii. 2), when accurately translated, a beautiful and perfect parallel: 'He giveth his beloved' (not 'sleep,' as in our Version, but) '*in* sleep;' God's gifts gliding into their bosom, they knowing not how, and as little expecting as having laboured for them. Of how many among the best gifts of every man's life will he not thankfully acknowledge this to have been true; or, if he refuse to allow it, and will acknowledge no *eudœmonia*, no 'favourable providence' in his prosperities, but will see them all as of work, how little he deserves, how little likely he is, to retain them to the end. Let us hold fast, then, this proverb as the most needful complement of those.

I should be wanting to hearers such as those who are assembled here, I should fall short of

[1] Εὕδοντι κύρτος αἱρεῖ.—Dormienti rete trahit. The reader with a *Plutarch's Lives* within his reach may turn to the very instructive little history told in connexion with this proverb, of Timotheus the Athenian commander; a history which only requires to be translated into Christian language to contain a deep moral for all (*Sulla*, c. 6).

that purpose which has been, more or less, present to me even in dealing with the lighter portions of my subject, if I did not earnestly remind you of the many of these sayings that there are, which, while they have their lesson for all, yet seem more directly addressed to those standing, as not a few of us here, at the threshold of the more serious and earnest portion of their lives. Lecturing to a *Young Men's Society*, I shall not unfitly press these upon your notice. Take this Italian one, for instance: *When you grind your corn, give not the flour to the devil, and the bran to God*;—in the distribution, that is, of your lives, apportion not your best years, with their strength and vigour, to the service of sin and of the world, and only the refuse and rejected to your Maker, the wine to others, and the lees to Him; for indeed, if you so do, there is another ancient proverb,[1] which in English runs thus: *It is too late to spare, when all is spent*; that will condemn you. The words have obviously a primary application to the goods of this present life; it is ill saving here, when nothing or next to nothing is left to save; but they are applied well by a heathen moralist (and the application lies very near), to those who begin to husband precious time, and to live for life's true ends, when life

[1] Sera in imo parsimonia.

is nearly gone, is now at its dregs; for, as he well urges, it is not the *least* only which remains at the bottom, but the *worst*.[1] On the other hand, *The morning hour has gold in its mouth*;[2] and this, true in respect of each of our days, in which the earlier hours given to toil will yield larger and more genial returns than the later, is true in a yet higher sense, of that great life-day, whereof all the lesser days of our life make up the moments, is true in respect of moral no less than mental acquisitions. The *evening* hours have often only *silver* in their mouths at the best. Nor is this Arabic proverb, as it appears to me, other than a very solemn one, being far deeper than at first sight it might seem: *Every day in thy life is a leaf in thy history*; a leaf which shall once be turned back to again, that it may be seen what was written there; and that whatever *was* written may be read out in the hearing of all.

Among the proverbs having to do with a prudent ordering of our lives from the very first, this Spanish seems well worthy to be adduced: *That which the fool does in the end, the wise man does at the beginning*;[3] the wise with a

[1] Seneca (*Ep.* i.): Non enim tantum *minimum* in imo, sed *pessimum* remanet.

[2] Morgenstund' hat Gold im Mund.

[3] Lo que hace el loco à la postre, hace sabio al principio.

good grace what the fool with an ill; the one to much profit what the other to little or to none. A word worth laying to heart; for, indeed, that purchase of the Sibylline books by the Roman king, what a significant symbol it is of much which at one time or another, or, it may be, at many times, is finding place in almost every man's life;—the same thing to be done in the end, the same price to be paid at the last, with only the difference, that much of the advantage, and perhaps all the grace, of an earlier compliance has past away. The nine precious volumes have shrunk to six, and these dwindled to three, while for all this the like price is demanded for the few as for the many; for the remnant now as would once have made all our own.

We every one of us have made, we probably shall make again, many and serious mistakes in the conduct of our lives. We may stupidly refuse to be taught by these mistakes, acting them over anew, or, angry with ourselves and losing all heart, may throw up the game in despair. But there is a more excellent way than either that or this; a way which the Latin proverb *To-day is the scholar of yesterday*[1] points out. Let our 'to-day' learn of our 'yesterday.' Believe me there is a teaching in our

[1] Discipulus est prioris posterior dies.

blunders and our errors, which is not anywhere else to be obtained—not from wise books, not from the exhortations of wise men, but oftentimes only to be gotten from those. Man has been likened to a diamond which can be polished only in its own dust.

In a former lecture I adduced a proverb which warned against a bad book as the worst of all robbers. There are books which are not bad, nay, which in the main are good, but in which there is yet an admixture of evil; such is the case with many which we have derived from that old world not as yet partaker of Christ. Now there is a proverb, which may very profitably accompany us in our study of all such: *Where the bee sucks honey, the spider sucks poison.* Keep this in mind, you who are making yourselves acquainted with the classical literature of antiquity, the great writers of heathen Greece and Rome. How much of noble, how much of elevating do they contain: what love of country, what zeal for wisdom, may be quickened in us by the study of them, what intellectual, yes, and even to us Christians what large moral gains will they yield. Let the student be as the bee looking for honey, and from the fields and gardens of classical literature he may store it abundantly in his hive. And yet from this same body of literature

what poison is it possible to draw; what loss, through familiarity with evil, of all vigorous abhorrence of it, till even the worst enormities shall come to be regarded with a speculative curiosity rather than with an earnest hatred,—yea, what lasting defilements of the imagination and the heart may be contracted hence, till nothing shall be pure, the very mind and conscience being defiled. Let there come one whose sympathies and affinities are with the poison and not with the honey, and in these fields it will not be impossible for him to find deadly flowers and weeds from which he may suck poison more than enough.

With a few remarks on two proverbs more I will bring this lecture to an end. Here is one with an insight at once subtle and profound into the heart of man: *Ill doers are ill deemers.* Instead of any commentary on this of my own, I shall quote some words of Henry More, which were not intended to be a commentary upon it at all, but which furnish notwithstanding a better than any which I could give. He is accounting for the offence which the Pharisee took at the Lord's acceptance, as recorded in the Gospel, of the affectionate homage and costly offering of the woman that was a sinner: 'Which familiar and affectionate officiousness, and sumptuous cost, together with that sinister

fame that woman was noted with, could not but give much scandal to the Pharisees there present. For that dispensation of the law under which they lived making nothing perfect, but only curbing the outward actions of men; it might very well be that they, being conscious to themselves of no better motions within than of either bitterness or lust, how fair soever they carried without, could not deem Christ's acceptance of so familiar and affectionate a service from a woman of that fame to proceed from anything better than some loose and vain principle, . . . for by how much every one is himself obnoxious to temptation, by so much more suspicious he is that others transgress, when there is anything that may tempt out the corruptions of a man.'

And in this Chinese proverb which follows, *Better a diamond with a flaw, than a pebble without one*, there is, to my mind, the assertion of a great Christian truth, and of one which reaches deep down to the very foundations of Christian morality, the more valuable as coming

[1] *On Godliness*, b. viii. How remarkable a confirmation of the fact asserted in that proverb and in this passage lies in the twofold uses of the Greek word κακοήθεια; having, for its first meaning, an evil disposition in a man's self, it has for its second a readiness on his part to interpret for the worst all the actions of others. Compare the Greek comic poet:

Ὅστις γὰρ ὀμνύοντι μηδὲν πείθεται,
Αὐτὸς ἐπιορκεῖν ῥᾳδίως ἐπίσταται.

to us from a people beyond the range and reach of the influences of direct Revelation. All whom I address may not be aware of the many and malignant assaults which were made on the Christian faith, and on the morality of the Bible, through the character of David, by the self-righteous Deists of the last century. Taking the Scripture testimony about him, that he was the man after God's heart, and putting beside this the record of those grievous sins which he committed, they sought to set these grievous, yet still isolated, offences in the most hateful light; and thus to bring him, and the Book which praised him, and the God who found pleasure in him, to a common shame. But all this while, the question concerning *the man*, what he was, and what was the moral sum-total of his life, to which alone the Scripture bore witness, and to which alone it was pledged, this was a question with which they concerned themselves not at all; while yet it was a far more important question than what any of his single acts may have been; and it was this, which, in the estimate of his character, was really at issue. Of the flaws there can be no doubt, in him, as in every other except the one 'entire and perfect chrysolite'; but were they flaws in a diamond? If so, then we are bold to affirm that the one diamond even with

these flaws outvies and outvalues a mountain of pebbles without such. Not to say that in all likelihood the pebbles on closer inspection would be found not so much to *be* without blemish, as to seem so, their flaws escaping immediate detection, while the clearer and more transparent material revealed at once the presence of these.

LECTURE VI.

THE THEOLOGY OF PROVERBS.

I ENDEAVOURED in my last lecture to furnish you with some helps for estimating the ethical worth of proverbs. Their theology alone remains to consider; the aspects, that is, under which they contemplate, not now any more man's relations with his fellow-man, but those on which in the end all other must depend, his relations with God. Between the subject matter, indeed, of that lecture and of this I have found it nearly impossible to draw any very accurate line of separation. Much which was there said might nearly as fitly be spoken here; some things which I have reserved for this might already have found their place there. It is this, however, which I propose more directly to consider, namely, what proverbs have to say concerning the moral government of the world, and, more important still, concerning its Governor? How does all this present itself to the popular mind and conscience, as attested by these? What, in short, is their theology? for such, good or

bad, it is evident that in no small measure they have.

Here, as everywhere else, their testimony is a mingled one. The darkness, the error, the confusion of man's heart, out of which he oftentimes sees distortedly, and sometimes sees not at all, have all embodied themselves in his word. Yet still, as it is the very nature of the false, in its separate manifestations, to resolve into nothingness, though only to be succeeded by new births in a like kind, while the true abides and continues, it has thus come to pass that we generally have in those utterances on which the stamp of permanence has been set, the nobler voices, the truer faith of humanity, in respect of its own destinies and of Him by whom those destinies are ordered.

I would not hesitate to say that the great glory of proverbs, in this their highest aspect, making many of them full of blessing to those who cordially accept them, is the conviction of which they are full, that, despite all appearances to the contrary, this world is God's world, and not the world of the devil, nor of those wicked men who may be doing the devil's work, and receiving his wages. Precious indeed is this faith of theirs, that however the 'tabernacles of the robbers' may prosper in it for a while, in the long run it will approve itself to

be God's; which being so, that it must be well in the end with the doer of the right, the speaker of the truth, and ill with them that forsake these; no blind 'whirligig of time,' but the hand of the living God, in due time 'bringing round its revenges.' It is not easy to estimate too highly the value of their bold and clear proclamation of this conviction; for it is, after all, the belief of this or the denial of this, on which everything in the life of each one of us turns. On this depends whether we shall separate ourselves from the world's falsehood and evil, and do vigorous battle against these; or acquiesce in and be ourselves absorbed by them.

And first, hear a proverb of our own: *A lie has no legs*; this is true in small and in great; let the lie be the miserable petty falsehood which disturbs a family or a neighbourhood for a day; or one of the huger falsehoods not in word only but in act, to which a far longer date and a far larger sphere are assigned, which for a time seem to fill the world, and to carry everything in triumph before them. Still the lie, in that it is a lie, always carries within itself the seeds of its own dissolution. It is sure to destroy itself at last. As the Greek poet said long ago, 'It never arrives at old age.' [1] Its

[1] Sophocles: Οὐδέν ποθ' ἕρπει ψεῦδος εἰς γῆρας χρόνου.

priests may prop it up from without, may set it on its feet again, after it has once fallen before the presence of the truth, yet this all will be labour in vain; it will only be, like Dagon, again to fall, and more shamefully and with a more irrecoverable ruin than at the first.[1] On the other hand, the vitality of the truth, as contrasted with this short-lived character of the lie, is well expressed in a Swiss proverb: *It takes a good many shovelfuls of earth to bury the truth.* It does so indeed; bury it as deep as men may, it will have a resurrection notwithstanding. Those who have conspired against it may roll a great stone, and seal the sepulchre in which it is laid, and set a watch upon it, yet for all this, like its Lord, it comes forth again at the appointed hour. It cannot die, being of an immortal race; for, as the Spanish proverb nobly declares, *The truth is daughter of God.*[2]

Again, consider this proverb: *Tell the truth, and shame the devil.* It is one which will well repay a few thoughtful moments bestowed on it, and the more so because, even while we instinctively feel its truth, the profound moral

[1] Perhaps the Spanish form of this proverb is still better: La mentira tiene *cortas* las piernas; for the lie does go, though not far. Compare the French: La vérité, comme l'huile, vient au-dessus.

[2] La verdad es hija de Dios.

basis on which it rests may not reveal itself to us at once. Nay, the saying may seem to contradict the actual experience of things; for how often telling the truth—confessing, perhaps, some great fault, taking home to ourselves, it may be, some grievous sin—must appear anything rather than a shaming of the devil; a shaming indeed of ourselves, but rather a bringing of glory to him, whose glory, such as it is, is in the sin and shame of men. And yet for all this the word is true. The element of lies is the only one in which he who is 'the father of them' lives and thrives. So long then as a wrong-doer presents to himself, or seeks to present to others, the actual facts of his conduct different from what they really are, conceals, palliates, distorts, denies them,—so long, in regard of that man, Satan's kingdom stands. But so soon as ever the things concerning a man are seen and owned by himself as they indeed exist in God's sight, as they are when weighed in the balances of the eternal righteousness; when once a man has brought himself to tell the truth to himself and to God, and, where need requires, to his fellow-men, then having this done, he has defied the devil, abandoned his standard; he belongs to the kingdom of the truth; and, belonging to it, he may rebuke, and does rebuke and put

to shame, all makers and lovers of a lie, even to the very prince of them all. 'Give glory to God,' was what Joshua said to Achan, when he would lead him to confess his guilt (Josh. vii. 19; cf. John ix. 24). This is but the other and fairer side of the tapestry; this is but the exhortation to *Shame the devil* on its more blessed side.

Once more;—the Latin proverb, *The voice of the people, the voice of God,*[1] is one which it is well worth our while to understand. If it were affirmed in this that every outcry of the multitude, supposing only it be loud enough and wide enough, ought to be accepted as the voice of God speaking through them, no proposition more foolish or more impious could well be imagined. But *the voice of the people* here is something very different from this. The proverb rests on the assumption that the foundations of man's being are laid in the truth; from which it will follow, that no conviction which is really a conviction of the universal humanity, but reposes on a true ground; no faith, which is indeed the faith of all mankind, but has a reality corresponding to it: for, as Jeremy Taylor has said: 'It is not a vain noise, when many nations join their voices in the attestation or detestation of an action:'

[1] Vox populi, vox Dei.

and Hooker: 'The general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God Himself. For that which all men have at all times learned, nature herself must needs have taught; and God being the author of nature, her voice is but his instrument.'[1] The task and difficulty, of course, must ever be to discover what this faith and what these convictions are; and this can only be done by an induction from a sufficient number of facts, gathered from sufficiently diverse quarters, and in sufficiently different times, to enable us to feel confident that we have indeed seized that which is the constant quantity of truth in them all, and separated this from the inconstant one of falsehood and error, evermore offering itself in its room; that we have not taken some momentary cry, wrung out by interest, by passion, or by pain, for *the voice of God*; but claimed this august title only for that true voice of humanity, which, unless everything be false, we have a right to assume an echo of the voice of God.

Thus, to take an example, the natural horror everywhere felt in regard of marriages contracted between those very near in blood, has been always and with right appealed to as a potent argument against such unions. The induction is so large, that is, the nations who

[1] *Eccles. Pol.* i. § 8.

have agreed in entertaining this horror are so many, oftentimes nations disagreeing in almost everything besides; the times during which this instinctive revolt against such unions has been felt, extend through such long ages; that the few exceptions, even where they are the exceptions of civilized nations, as of the Egyptians who married their sisters, or of the Persians, among whom marriages more dreadful still were permitted, cannot be allowed any weight; and of course still less the exception of any savage tribe, in which all or nearly all that constitutes the truly human in humanity has now disappeared. These exceptions can only be regarded as violations of the divine order of man's life; not as evidences that we have erroneously imagined such an order where there was none. Here is a true *voice of the people*; and on the grounds laid down above, we have a right to assume this to be a *voice of God* as well. And so too, on the question of the existence of a First Cause, Creator and Upholder of all things, the universal consent and conviction of all people, the *consensus gentium*, must be considered of itself a mighty evidence in its favour; a testimony which God is pleased to render to Himself through His creatures. This man or that, this generation or the other, might be deceived, but all men

and all generations could not; the *vox populi* makes itself felt as a *vox Dei*. The existence here and there of an atheist no more disturbs our conclusion that it is of the essence of man's nature to believe in a God, than do such monstrous births as from time to time find place, children with two heads or with no arms, shake our assurance that it is the normal condition of man to have one head and two arms.

This last is one of the proverbs which may be said to belong to the Apology for Natural Religion. There are others, of which it would not be far-fetched to affirm that they belong to the Apology for Revealed. Thus it was very usual with Voltaire and other unbelievers of his time to appeal to the present barrenness and desolation of Palestine, in proof that it could never have supported the vast population which the Scripture everywhere assumes or affirms. A proverb in the language of the arch-scoffer himself might, if he had given heed to it, have put him on the right track, had he wished to be put upon it, for understanding how this could have been: *As the man is worth, his land is worth.*[1] Man is lord of the outward conditions of his existence to a far greater extent than is commonly assumed; even climate, which seems at first sight so

[1] Tant vaut l'homme, tant vaut sa terre.

completely out of his reach, it is in his power immensely to modify; and if nature stamps herself on him, he stamps himself yet more powerfully on nature. It is not a mere figure of speech, that of the Psalmist, 'A fruitful land maketh He barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein' (Ps. cvii. 34). God makes it barren, and ever less capable of nourishing its inhabitants; but He makes it so through the sloth, the indolence, the selfish shortsightedness, the quarrels among themselves of those that should have dressed and kept it. In the condition of a land may be found the echo, the reflection, the transcript of the moral and spiritual condition of those that should cultivate it: where one is waste, the other will be waste also. Under the desolating curse of Mohammedan domination the fairest portions of the earth have gone back from a garden to a wilderness: but only let that people for whom Palestine is yet destined return to it again, and return a righteous nation, and in a little while all the descriptions of its earlier fertility will be more than borne out by its later, and it will easily sustain its millions again.

How many proverbs, which cannot be affirmed to have been originally made for the kingdom

of heaven, do yet in their highest fulfilment manifestly belong to it, so that it seems as of right to claim them for its own; even as it claims, or rather reclaims, whatever else is good or true in the world, the seeds of truth wherever dispersed abroad, as belonging rightfully to itself. Thus there is that beautiful proverb, of which Pythagoras is reputed the author: *The things of friends are in common.*[1] Where does this find its exhaustive fulfilment, but in the communion of saints, their communion not with one another merely, though indeed this is a partial fulfilment, but in their communion with Him, who is the Friend of all good men? That such a conclusion lay legitimately in the words Socrates plainly saw; who argued from them, that since good men were the friends of the gods, therefore whatever things were the gods', were also theirs; being, when he thus concluded, as near as one who had not the highest light of all, could be to that great word of the Apostle's, 'All things are yours.'

Nor can I otherwise than esteem the ancient proverb as a very fine one, and one which we may gladly claim for our own: *Many meet the gods, but few salute them.* How often do *the gods* (for I will continue in the language which this proverb suggests and supplies) *meet* men

[1] Κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

in the shape of a sorrow which might be a purifying one, of a joy which might elevate their hearts to thankfulness and praise; in a sickness or a recovery, in a disappointment or a success; and yet how few, as it must be sadly confessed, *salute* them; how few recognize their august presences in this joy or this sorrow, this blessing added or this blessing taken away. As this proverb has reference to men's failing to *see* the Divine presences, so let me remind you of a very grand French one which expresses the same truth, under the image of a failing to *hear* the divine voices, those voices being drowned for too many by the deafening tumult and hubbub of the world: *The noise is so great, one cannot hear God thunder.*[1]

Here is another proverb which the Church has long since claimed, at least in its import, for her own: *One man, no man.*[2] I should find it very hard to believe that whoever uttered it first, attached to it no deeper meaning than Erasmus gives him credit for—namely, that nothing important can be effected by a single man, destitute of the help of his fellows.[3] The word is a far more profound one than this, and rests on that great truth upon which the deeper

[1] Le bruit est si fort, qu'on n'entend pas Dieu tonner.

[2] Εἷς ἀνήρ, οὐδεὶς ἀνήρ.—Ein Mann, kein Mann.

[3] Sensus est, nihil egregium præstari posse ab uno homine, omni auxilio destituto.

thinkers of antiquity laid so much stress—namely, that *in the idea* the state precedes the individual, man not being merely accidentally *gregarious*, but essentially *social*. The solitary man, it would say, is a monstrous conception, so utterly maimed and crippled must he be; the condition of solitariness involving so entire a suppression of all which belongs to the development of that wherein the true idea of humanity resides, of all which differences man from the beasts of the field; and in this sense *One man* is *no man*; and this, I am sure, the proverb from the first intended. Nor may we stop here. This word is capable of, and seems to demand, a still higher application to man as a destined member of the kingdom of heaven. But he can only be training and educating for this, when he is, and regards himself, as not alone, but as the member of a family. As *one man* he is *no man*; and the strength and value of what is called Church teaching is greatly this, that it does recognize and realize this fact, that it contemplates and deals with the faithful man, not as isolated, but as one of an organic body, with duties which flow as moral necessities from his position therein; rather than by himself, and as one whose duties to others are indeed only opportunities for the exercise of private graces for his own benefit.

And then there is another proverb, which Socrates (or Plato speaking by the mouth of Socrates) did not fail to quote often against the sophists, the men who flattered and corrupted the nobler youth of Athens, promising to impart to them easy short cuts to the attainment of wisdom and knowledge and philosophy; such as should not demand from them the exercise of any labour or patience or self-denial on their parts. With the proverb, *Good things are hard*,[1] he continually rebuked their empty pretensions; with this he made at least suspicious their deceitful promises; and this proverb, true in the sense wherein Plato used it, and that sense was earnest and serious enough, yet surely reappears, glorified and transfigured, but recognisable still, in the Saviour's words: 'The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, and the violent take it by force.'[2]

[1] Χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά.

[2] The deepening of a proverb's use among Christian nations as compared with earlier applications of the same may be illustrated by an example, which however, as not being directly theological, and thus not bearing immediately upon the matter in hand, I shall prefer to append in a note. An old Greek and Latin proverb, *A great city, a great solitude* (Magna civitas, magna solitudo), dwelt merely on the outside of things, and meant no more than this, namely, that a city ambitiously laid out and upon a large scheme would with difficulty find inhabitants sufficient, would wear an appearance of emptiness and desolation; as there used to be a jest about Washington, that strangers would sometimes imagine themselves deep in the woods, when indeed they were in the centre of the city. But

I am unable to speak with confidence of the proverb *Amantes amentes*, whether it belongs to the old heathen or the modern Christian world; but assuredly it is a proverb capable of a very lofty application. 'We are fools for Christ's sake,' said the Apostle Paul, he being one of the *amentes*, but only because first one of the *amantes*. And how many since might have taken the words on their lips, even as they have illustrated them by their lives. Francis of Assisi stands out before me as eminently one of the first and foremost among these, the *amantes amentes* of the proverb.

This method of looking in proverbs for a

with deeper cravings of the human heart after love and affection, the proverb was claimed in a higher sense. We may take in proof these striking words of De Quincey, which are the more striking that neither they nor the context contain any direct reference to the proverb: 'No man,' he says, 'ever was left to himself for the first time in the streets, as yet unknown, of London, but he must have felt saddened and mortified, perhaps terrified, by the sense of desertion and utter loneliness which belongs to his situation. No loneliness can be like that which weighs upon the heart in the centre of faces never ending, without voice or utterance for him; eyes innumerable that have "no speculation" in their orbs which *he* can understand; and hurrying figures of men and women weaving to and fro, with no apparent purposes intelligible to a stranger, seeming like a masque of maniacs, or a pageant of shadowy illusions.' A direct reference to the proverb is to be found in some affecting words of Lord Bacon, who glosses and explains it exactly in this sense;—'For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.'

higher meaning than any which lies on their surface, or which they seem to bear on their fronts; or rather this searching out their highest intention, and claiming that as their truest, even though it be not that which those who use them generally perceive in them, or that which lay nearest to them at their first generation, will lead in many interesting paths. And it is not merely those of heathen antiquity which shall thus be persuaded often, and that without any forcing, to render up a Christian meaning; but (as might indeed be expected) still more often those of a later time, such as the world had seemed to challenge for its own, shall be found to move in a spiritual sphere as their truest. Let me offer in evidence of this these four or five, which come to us from Italy: *He who has love in his heart, has spurs in his sides;—Love rules without law;—Love rules his kingdom without a sword;—Love knows nothing of labour;—Love is the master of all arts.*[1] Take these, even with the necessary drawbacks of my English translation; but still more, in their original beauty; and how exquisitely do

[1] Chi ha l'amor nel petto, ha lo sprone ai fianchi.—Amor regge senza legge (cf. Rom. xiii. 9, 10).—Amor regge il suo regno senza spada.—Amor non conosce travaglio (cf. Gen. xxix. 20, 30).—Di tutte le arti maestro è amore.—Di tutto condimento è amore.

they set forth, in whatever light you regard them, the free creative impulses of love, its delight to labour and to serve; how worthily do they glorify the kingdom of love as the only kingdom of a free and joyful obedience. While yet at the same time, if we would appreciate them at *all* their worth, is it possible to stop short of an application of them to that kingdom of love, which, because it is in the highest sense such, is also a kingdom of heaven? And then, what precious witness do these utterances contain, the more precious as current among a people nursed in the theology of Rome, against the shameless assertion that selfishness is the only motive sufficient to produce good works: for in such an assertion the Romish impugners of a free justification constantly deal; evermore charging this that we hold, of our justification by faith only (which, when translated into the language of ethics, is at least as important in the province of morality as it is in that of theology), with being an immoral doctrine, such as must remain barren in deeds of charity, as compared with one which should connect these deeds with a selfish thought of promoting our own interest thereby.

There are proverbs which reach the height of evangelical morality. 'Little gospels'[1] the

[1] Evangelios pequeños.

Spaniard has somewhat too boldly entitled some of his; and certainly there are many which at once we feel could nowhere have arisen or obtained circulation but under the influence of Christian faith, being in spirit, and often in form no less than in spirit, the outcomings of it. Thus is it with that exquisitely beautiful proverb of our own: *The way to heaven is by Weeping-Cross*;[1] nor otherwise with the Spanish: *God never wounds with both hands*;[2] not with *both*, for He ever reserves one with which to bind up and to heal. And another Spanish, evidently intended to give the sum and substance of all which in life is to be desired the most, *Peace and patience, and death with penitence*,[3] gives this sum certainly only as it presents itself to the Christian eye. And this of our own is Christian both in form and in spirit: *Every cross hath its inscription*; the name, that is, inscribed upon it, of the person for whom it was shaped; it was intended for those shoulders upon which it is laid, and will adapt itself to them; for that fearful word is never true, which a spirit greatly vexed spake in the hour of its impatience: 'I have little

[1] Der Weg zum Himmel geht durch Kreuzdorn. Compare the medieval obverse of the same: Via Crucis, via lucis.

[2] No hiere Dios con dos manos.

[3] Paz y paciencia, y muerte con penitencia.

faith in the paternal love which I need; so ruthless, or so negligent seems the government of this earth.' [1]

Of the same character is that ancient German proverb: *When God loathes aught, men presently loathe it too.*[2] He who first uttered this must have watched long the ways by which shame and honour travel in this world; and in this watching must have noted how it ever came to pass that even worldly honour tarried not long with them from whom the true honour of which God is the dispenser had departed. For the worldly honour is but a shadow and reflex that waits upon the heavenly; it may indeed linger for a little, but it will be only for a little, after it is divorced from its substance. Where the honour from Him has been withdrawn, He causes in one way or another the honour from men ere long to be withdrawn too. When He loathes, presently man loathes also. The saltless salt is not merely cast out by Him, but is trodden under foot *of men* (Matt. v. 13). A Louis the Fifteenth's death-bed is in its way as

[1] *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller*, vol. iii. p. 266. Of words like these, wrung out from moments of agony, may we not hope that our own proverb, *For mad words deaf ears*, is often graciously true, even in the very courts of heaven?

[2] Wenn Gott ein Ding verdreusst, so verdreusst es auch bald die Menschen.

hideous to the natural as it is to the spiritual eye.[1]

We are told of the good Sir Matthew Hale, who was animated with a true zeal for holiness, an earnest desire to walk close to God, that he had continually in his mouth the modern Latin proverb, *We perish by permitted things.*[2] Assuredly it is one very well worthy to be of all remembered, searching as it does into the innermost secrets of men's lives. It is no doubt true that nearly as much danger threatens the soul from things permitted as from things unpermitted; in some respects more danger; for these being disallowed altogether, do not make the insidious approaches of the other, which coming in under allowance, so easily slip into dangerous excess.

It would be interesting to collect, as with reverence one might, variations on scriptural proverbs or sayings, which the proverbs of this world supply; and this, both in those cases where the latter have grown out of the former, owing more nearly or more remotely their

[1] The following have all a right to be termed Christian proverbs: Chi non vuol servir ad un solo Signor, a molti ha da servir;—È padron del mondo chi lo disprezza, schiavo chi lo apprezza;—Quando Dios quiere, con todos vientos llueve.

[2] Perimus licitis.

existence to them, and in those also where they are independent of them,—so far, that is, as aught which is true can be regarded as independent of the absolute Truth. Some of those which follow evidently belong to one of these classes, some to the other. Thus Solomon has said: 'It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house' (Prov. xxi. 9); and again: 'Better a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife' (Prov. xvii. 1). With these may be compared a Latin proverb, which, however, turning on a play of words, I have no choice but to quote in the original: 'Non quam *late* sed quam *læte* habitas, refert.'[1] The Psalmist has said: 'As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him' (Ps. cix. 17). The Turks express their faith in this same law of the divine retaliations: *Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost*: they return, that is, to those from whom they went forth, while in the Yoruba language there is a proverb to the same effect: *Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them*; while our own, *Harm watch, harm catch*, and the Spanish, *Who sows thorns, let him not walk barefoot*,[2] are utterances

[1] Compare this Spanish: Mas vale un pedazo de pan con amor, que gallinas con dolor.

[2] Quien siembra abrojos, no ande descalzo. Compare the

of very nearly the same conviction. Our Lord declares, that without his Father there falls no single sparrow to the ground, that 'not one of them is forgotten before God' (Luke xii. 6). The same truth of a *providentia specialissima* (between which and no providence at all there is indeed no tenable position), is asserted in the Catalan proverb: *No leaf moves, but God wills it.*[1] Again, He has said: 'No man can serve two masters' (Matt. vi. 24); compare the Spanish proverb: *He who must serve two masters, must lie to one.*[2] Or compare with Matt. xix. 29, this remarkable Arabic proverb: *Purchase the next world with this; so shalt thou win both.* Christ has spoken of 'mammon of unrighteousness'—indicating hereby, in Leighton's words, 'that iniquity is so involved in the notion of riches, that it can very hardly be separated from them;' and this phrase Jerome illustrates by a proverb which would not otherwise have reached us; 'that saying,' he says, 'appears true to me: *A rich man is either himself an unjust one, or the heir of one.*'[3] Again,

Latin: Si vultur es, cadaver expecta; and the French: Maudissons sont feuilles; qui les sème, il les recueille.

[1] No se mou la fulla, que Deu no ha vulla. This is one of the proverbs of which the peculiar grace and charm nearly disappear in the rendering.

[2] Quien á dos señores ha de servir, al uno ha de mentir.

[3] Verum mihi videtur illud: Dives aut iniquus, aut iniqui

the Lord has said: 'Many be called, but few chosen' (Matt. xx. 16); many have the outward marks of a Christian profession, few the inner substance. Some early Christian Fathers loved much to bring into comparison with this a Greek proverb, spoken indeed quite independently of it, and long previously; and the parallel certainly is a singularly happy one: *The thyrsus-bearers are many, but the bacchants few*;[1] many assume the outward tokens of inspiration, whirling the thyrsus aloft; but those whom the god indeed fills with his spirit are few all the while.[2] With our Lord's words concerning the mote and the beam (Matt. vii. 3, 5) compare this Chinese proverb: *Sweep away the*

hæres. Out of a sense of the same, as I take it, the striking Italian proverb had its rise: Mai diventò fiume grande, che non v' entrasse acqua torbida.

[1] Πολλοί τοι ναρθηκοφόροι, παῦροι δέ τε βάκχοι.

[2] The fact which this proverb proclaims, of a great gulf existing between what men profess and what they are, is one too frequently thrusting itself on the notice of all, not to have found its utterance in an infinite variety of forms, although none perhaps so deep and poetical as this. Thus there is another Greek line, fairly represented by this Latin:

Qui tauros stimulent multi, sed rarus arator;

and there is the classical Roman proverb: Non omnes qui habent citharam, sunt citharœdi; and the medieval rhyming verse:

Non est venator quivis per cornua flator;

and this Eastern word: *Hast thou mounted the pulpit, thou art not therefore a preacher*; with many more.

snow from thine own door, and heed not the frost upon thy neighbour's tiles. And is there not the echo or the anticipation—which, it does not matter much—of more than one of our Lord's most solemn exhortations (as of Matt. xix. 28, 29), in this proverb of the Talmud, *Divorce from this world is marriage with the next.*

I question whether we of the clergy might not make larger use, though of course it would be only occasional, of proverbs in our public teaching than we do. Great popular preachers of time past, or, seeing that this phrase has now so questionable a sound, great preachers for the people, such as have found their way to the universal heart of their fellows, addressing themselves not to that which some men had different from others, but to that rather which each had in common with all, have been ever frequent employers of proverbs. Thus he who would know the riches of those in the German tongue, with the vigorous and manifold application of which they are capable, will find no richer mine to dig in than the works of Luther. One who has in this intent gone through the sixteen folio volumes of which these works consist, reports to the existence of three thousand proverbs therein. Such use of them as I suggest would, I believe, with our country congregations be especially valuable. Any one, who by

after investigation has sought to discover how much our rustic hearers carry away, even from the sermons to which they have attentively listened, will find that it is hardly ever the course and tenor of the argument, supposing the discourse to have contained such; but if anything was uttered, as it used so often to be by the best Puritan preachers, tersely, pointedly, epigrammatically, this will have stayed by them, while all beside has passed away. Now the merits of terseness and point, which have caused other words to be remembered, are exactly the merits which signalize the proverb, and without which it would scarcely have obtained that general acceptance which it possesses.

It need scarcely be observed, that, if thus used, they will need to be employed with prudence and discretion, and with a careful selection. Thus, even with the example of so grave a divine as Bishop Sanderson before me, I should hesitate to employ in a sermon such a proverb as *Over shoes, over boots*—one which he declares to be the motto of some, who having advanced a certain way in sin, presently become utterly wretchless, counting it wholly indifferent how much further in evil they advance. Nor would I exactly recommend such use of a proverb as St. Bernard makes,

who, in a sermon on the angels, desiring to shew *à priori* the extreme probability of their active and loving ministries in the service of men, adduces the Latin proverb, *Who loves me, loves my dog*;[1] and proceeds to argue thus; We are the dogs under Christ's table; the angels love Him, they therefore love us.

But, although not exactly thus, the thing, I am persuaded, might be done, and with profit. Thus, in a discourse warning against sins of the tongue, we might produce many words of our own to describe the mischief it inflicts which would be flatter, duller, less likely to be remembered than the old proverb: *The tongue is not steel, but it cuts.* On God's faithfulness in sustaining, upholding, rewarding his servants, there are feebler things which we might bring out of our own treasure-house, than to remind our hearers of that word: *He who serves God, serves a good Master.* And this one might sink deep, telling of the enemy whom every one of us has the most to fear: *No man has a worse friend than he brings with him from home.* It stands in striking agreement with Augustine's remarkable prayer, 'Deliver me from the evil man, from myself.'[2] Or again: *Ill weeds grow*

[1] Qui me amat, amat et canem meum (*In Fest. S. Mich. Serm.* i. § 3).

[2] Libera me ab homine malo, a meipso.

apace;—with how lively an image does this set forth to us the rank luxuriant up-growth of sinful lusts and desires in the garden of an uncared-for, untended heart. And then on the danger of overlooking and forgetting the suffering of others which is not actually submitted to our eyes: *What the eye does not see, the heart does not rue.* Or take again the world's confession that he who hides his talent is guilty not less than he who wastes it, as uttering itself in the following proverb: *He who does no good, does evil enough.* I know not whether we might presume sufficient quickness of apprehension on the part of our hearers to venture on the following: *The horse which draws its halter is not quite escaped*; but I can hardly imagine a happier illustration of the fact, that so long as any remnant of a sinful habit is retained by us, so long as we draw this halter, we make but an idle boast of our liberty; we may, by means of that which we still drag with us, be at any moment again entangled altogether in the bondage from which we seemed to have altogether escaped.

Some of the noblest proverbs in every language are those embodying men's confidence in God's moral government of the world, in his avenging righteousness, however much there may be in the confusions of the present evil

time to suggest a doubt or provoke a denial of this. Thus, *Punishment is lame, but it comes,* which, if not old, yet rests on an image derived from antiquity, is good; although inferior in every way, in energy of expression as in fulness of sense, to that ancient Greek one, *The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder*;[1] for this brings in the further thought, that his judgments, however long they tarry, yet when they arrive, are crushing ones. There is indeed another of our own, not unworthy to be set beside this, announcing, though with quite another image, the same fact of the tardy but terrible arrivals of judgment: *God moves with leaden feet, but strikes with iron hands.* And then, how awfully sublime another which has come down to us as part of the wisdom of the ancient heathen world: *The feet of the* (*avenging*) *deities are shod with wool.*[2] Here a new thought is introduced—the noiseless approach and advance of these judgments, as noiseless as the steps of one whose feet were wrapped in wool,—the manner in which they overtake secure sinners even in the hour of their utmost security. Who that has studied the history of

[1] Ὀψὲ Θεῶν ἁλέουσι μύλοι, ἀλέουσι δὲ λεπτά. We may compare the Latin: Habet Deus suas horas, et moras; and the Spanish: Dios no se queja, mas lo suyo no lo deja.

[2] Dî laneos habent pedes.

the great crimes and criminals of the world, but will with a shuddering awe set his seal to the truth of this proverb? Indeed, meditating on such and on the source from which we have derived them, one is sometimes tempted to believe that the faith in a divine retribution evermore making itself felt in the world, this sense of a Nemesis, as men used to call it, was stronger and deeper in the better days of heathendom, than alas! it is in a sunken Christendom now.[1]

But to resume. Even those proverbs which have acquired a use which seems to unite at once the trivial and the profane, may yet on closer inspection be found to be very far from having either triviality or profaneness cleaving to them. There is one, for instance, often taken lightly enough upon the lips: *Talk of the*

[1] Thus how solemn and sublime a series of passages on this matter might be drawn from the Greek tragic poets; all setting their seal to that great truth—

δρμᾶται μόλις, ἀλλ' ὅμως
πιστὸν τό γε θεῖον σθένος.

Or again, as the same poet has it,

χρόνια μὲν τὰ τῶν Θεῶν πως,
εἰς τέλος δ' οὐκ ἀσθενῆ.

Homelier than these, but setting forth the same truth, is the German proverb: *God is a creditor who has no bad debts* (Gott ist ein Glaubiger, der keine bösen Schulden macht). Sooner or later, in this world or the other, they are all got in.

devil, and he is sure to appear; or, as it used to be: *Talk of the devil, and his imps will appear*; or as in German it is: *Paint the devil on the wall, and he will shew himself anon*;—which yet contains truth serious and important enough, if we would only give heed to it: it contains, in fact, a very solemn warning against a very dangerous temptation, I mean, curiosity about evil. It has been often noticed, and is a very curious psychological fact, that there is a tendency in a great crime to reproduce and repeat itself, to call forth, that is, other crimes of the same character: and there is a fearful response which the evil we may hear or read about, is in danger of finding in our own hearts. This danger, then, assuredly makes it true wisdom, and a piece of moral prudence on the part of all to whom this is permitted, to avoid knowing or learning about the evil; especially when neither duty nor necessity oblige them thereto. It is men's wisdom to talk as little about the devil, either with themselves or with others, as they can; lest he appear to them. 'I agree with you,' says Niebuhr very profoundly in one of his letters,[1] 'that it is better not to read books in which you make the acquaintance of the devil.' And certainly there is a remarkable commentary on this proverb, so inter-

[1] *Life*, vol. i p. 312.

preted, in the earnest warning given to the children of Israel, that they should not so much as *inquire* how the nations which were before them in Canaan, served their gods, with what cruelties, with what abominable impurities, lest through this inquiry they should be themselves entangled in the same (Deut. xii. 29, 30). They were not to talk about the devil, lest he should appear to them. The *infanda, nefanda*, declare by these very names that they are not to be spoken about.

And other proverbs, too, which at first sight may seem over-familiar with the name of the ghostly enemy of mankind, yet contain lessons which it would be an infinite pity to lose; as this German: *Where the devil cannot come, he will send*;[1] a proverb of very serious import, which excellently sets out to us the *penetrative* character of temptations, and the certainty that they will follow and find men out in their most secret retreats. It rebukes the absurdity of supposing that by any outward arrangements, cloistral retirements, flights into the wilderness, sin can be kept at a distance. So far from this, temptations will inevitably overleap all these outward and merely artificial barriers which may be raised up against them;

[1] Wo der Teufel nicht hin mag kommen, da send er seinen Boten hin.

for our great enemy is as formidable from a seeming distance as in close combat; *where he cannot come, he will send.* There are others of the same family, as the following: *The devil's meal is half bran*; or *all bran*, as the Italians more boldly and more truly proclaim it;[1] unrighteous gains are sure to disappoint the getter; the pleasures of sin, even in this present time, are largely dashed with its pains. And will any refuse to acknowledge that this has its lesson: *He had need of a long spoon that eats with the devil*;—men fancy, that is, they can cheat the arch-cheater, can advance in partnership with him up to a certain point, and then, whenever the connexion becomes too perilous, break it off at their will; being sure in this to be miserably deceived; for, to quote another in the same tone: *He who has shipped the devil, must carry him over the water*; there is no getting rid of him when he is found a dangerous fellow-passenger. In this too there speaks out a just scorn of those who, having entertained no scruple about a sin, reserve all their scruples for some trifling adjunct of the sin: *If you have swallowed the devil, you may swallow his horns.* Granting these and the like to have been often carelessly uttered, yet they rest notwithstanding upon a true moral basis

[1] La farina del diavolo se ne va in semola.

in the main. This last series of proverbs I will close with an Arabic one, to which not even this appearance of levity can be ascribed; for it is as solemn and sublime in form as it is profound in substance: *The blessings of the evil Genii are curses.* How deep a significance the story of Fortunatus acquires, when taken as a commentary on this.

But I am warned to draw my lecture to an end. I have adduced in the course of these lectures no inconsiderable number of proverbs, and have sought for the most part to deduce from them lessons, which were lessons in common for us all. There is one, however, which I must not pass over, for it contains an especial lesson for myself, and a lesson which I shall do wisely and well at this present time to lay to heart. When the Spaniards would describe a tedious writer, one who possesses the art of exhausting the patience of his readers, they say of him: *He leaves nothing in his inkstand.* The phrase is a singularly happy one, for assuredly there is no such secret of tediousness, no such certain means of wearing out the attention of our readers or our hearers, as the attempt to say everything ourselves, instead of leaving something to be filled up by their intelligence; while the merits of a composition or

of a speech are often displayed as really, if not so prominently, in what is passed over as in what is spoken or set down; in nothing more than in the just measure of the confidence which it shows in the capacities and powers of those to whom it is addressed. I would not willingly come under the condemnation, which waits on them who thus *leave nothing in their inkstand*; and lest I should do so, I will bring now this my final lecture to its close, and having put you upon this track, ask you to draw out for yourselves those further lessons from proverbs, which they are abundantly capable of yielding.

APPENDIX.

ON THE METRICAL LATIN PROVERBS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. (See p. 31.)

I HAVE nowhere seen brought together a collection of these medieval proverbs cast into the form of a rhyming hexameter. Erasmus, though he often illustrates the proverbs of the ancient world by those of the new, does not quote, as far as I am aware, through the whole of his enormous collection, a single one of these which occupy a middle place between the two; a fact in its way curiously illustrative of the degree to which the attention of the great Humanists at the revival of learning was exclusively directed to the classical literature of Greece and Rome. Yet proverbs in this form exist in considerable numbers; being of very various degrees of merit, as will be seen from the following selection; in which some are keen and piquant enough, while others are of very subordinate value; those which seemed to me utterly valueless—and they were not few—I have excluded altogether. The reader familiar with proverbs will detect correspondents to very many of them, besides the few which I have quoted, in one modern language or another, often in many

Accipe, sume, cape, tria sunt gratissima Papæ.

Let me observe here, once for all, that the lengthening of the final syllable in *capē*, is not to be set down to the ignorance or carelessness of the writer; but in the scheme of the medieval hexameter, the unavoidable stress or pause on the first syllable of the third foot was counted sufficient to lengthen the shortest syllable in that position.

Ad secreta poli curas extendere noli.
Ædibus in propriis canis est mordacior omnis.
Ægro sanato, frustra dices, Numerato.
Amphora sub veste raro portatur honeste.
Ante Dei vultum nihil unquam restat inultum.
Ante molam primus qui venit, non molat imus.
Arbor honoretur cujus nos umbra tuetur.
Arbor naturam dat fructibus atque figuram.
Arbor ut ex fructu, sic nequam noscitur actu.
Ars compensabit quod vis tibi magna negabit.
Artem natura superat sine vi, sine curâ.
Artes per partes, non partes disce per artes.
Aspera vox, Ite, sed vox est blanda, Venite.

An allusion to Matt. xxv. 34, 41.

Audit quod non vult qui pergit dicere quod vult.
Capta avis est pluris quam mille in gramine ruris.
Cari rixantur, rixantes conciliantur.
Carius est carum, si prægustatur amarum.
Casus dementis correctio fit sapientis.
Catus sæpe satur cum capto mure jocatur.
Cautus homo cavit si quem natura notavit.
Conjugium sine prole, dies veluti sine sole.

Contra vim mortis non herbula crescit in hortis.

Cui puer assuescit, major dimittere nescit.

The same appears also in a pentameter, and under an Horatian image: Quod nova testa capit, inveterata sapit.

Cui sunt multa bona, huic dantur plurima dona.

Cum jocus est verus, jocus est malus atque severus.

So the Spanish: Malas son las burlas verdaderas.

Curvum se præbet quod in uncum crescere debet.

Dat bene, dat multum, qui dat cum munere vultum.

'He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness' (Rom. xii. 8). Cf. Ecclus. xxxv. 9; SENECA, *De Benef.*, i. 1.

Deficit ambobus qui vult servire duobus.

Dicitur oblatum fore servitium male gratum.

Dives marcescit quanto plus copia crescit.

Dormit secure, cui non est functio curæ.

Far from court, far from care.

Ebibe vas totum, si vis cognoscere potum.

Est facies testis, quales intrinsecus estis.

Est nulli certum cui pugna velit dare sertum.

Ex linguâ stultâ veniunt incommoda multa.

Ex magnâ cœnâ stomacho fit maxima pœna.

Ex minimo crescit, sed non cito fama quiescit.

Ex ovis pullus non natis sero fit ullus.

Fœmina ridendo flendo fallitque canendo.

Frangitur ira gravis, cum fit responsio suavis.

Fures in lite pandunt abscondita vitæ.

So in Spanish: Riñen las comadres, y dicense las verdades.

Furtivus potus plenus dulcedine totus.

Hoc retine verbum, frangit Deus omne superbum.

Illa mihi patria est, ubi pascor, non ubi nascor.
Impedit omne forum defectus denariorum.
In vestimentis non stat sapientia mentis.
In vili veste nemo tractatur honeste.

The Russians have a worthier proverb: *A man's reception is according to his coat; his dismissal according to his sense.*

Jejunus venter non audit verba libenter.
Linguam frænare plus est quam castra domare.
Lingua susurronis est pejor felle draconis.
Musca, canes, mimi veniunt ad fercula primi.
Mus salit in stratum, cum scit non adfore catum.
Ne credas undam placidam non esse profundam.
Nil citò mutabis, donec meliora parabis.
Nobilitas morum magis ornat quam genitorum.
Non colit arva bene, qui semen mandat arenæ.
Non est in mundo dives qui dicit, Abundo.
Non est rex legi sed lex obnoxia regi.
Non est venator quivis per cornua flator.
Non facit hoc stultum prudenter quærere multum.
Non habet anguillam, per caudam qui tenet illam.
Non stat securus, qui protinus est ruiturus.
Non vult scire satur quid jejunus patiatur.
O dives dives, non omni tempore vives.
Omnibus est nomen, sed idem non omnibus omen.
Parvis imbutus tentabis grandia tutus.
Pelle sub agninâ latitat mens sæpe lupina.
Per multum Cras, Cras, omnis consumitur ætas.
Prodigus est natus de parco patre creatus.
Quando mutetur villanus, pejor habetur.

Quando tumet venter, produntur facta latenter.
Qui bene vult fari debet bene præmeditari.
Quidquid agit mundus, monachus vult esse secundus.
Qui nescit partes in vanum tendit in artes.
Qui petit alta nimis, retro lapsus ponitur imis.
Qui pingit florem non pingit floris odorem.
Qui se non noscat vicini jurgia poscat.
Quisquis amat luscam, luscam putat esse venustam.
Quisquis amat ranam, ranam putat esse Dianam.
Quo minime reris de gurgite pisce frueris.
Quod raro cernit oculi lux, cor cito spernit.
Quos vult sors ditat, et quos vult sub pede tritat.
Res satis est nota, plus fœtent stercora mota.
Rustica natura semper sequitur sua jura.
Scribatur portis, Meretrix est janua mortis.
Sepes calcatur, quâ pronior esse putatur.
Si curiam curas, pariet tibi curia curas.
Si nequeas plures, vel te solummodo cures.
Singula captentur; sic omnia fine tenentur.
Si non morderis, cane quid latrante vereris?
Si quis det mannos ne quære in dentibus annos.
Stare diu nescit, quod non aliquando quiescit.
Subtrahe ligna focis, flammam restinguere si vis.
Sunt asini multi solum bino pede fulti.
Sus magis in cœno gaudet quam fonte sereno.
Tam male nil cusum, quod nullum prosit in usum
Totâ equidem novi plus testâ pars valet ovi.
Ultra posse viri non vult Deus ulla requiri.
Una avis in dextrâ melior quam quatuor extra.

Ungentem pungit, pungentem rusticus ungit.
Ut dicunt multi, Cito transit lancea stulti.
Verba satis celant mores, eademque revelant.
Vos inopes nôstis, quis amicus quisve sit hostis.
Vulpes vult fraudem, lupus agnum, fœmina laudem.

Add to these a few of the same description, but unrhymed:

Catus amat pisces, sed non vult tingere plantam.

It is with this proverb, which is almost of all languages, that Lady Macbeth taunts her husband, as one—

'Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
Like the poor cat i' the adage.'—Act I. Scene 7.

Cochlea consiliis, in factis esto volucris.
Dat Deus omne bonum, sed non per cornua taurum.

The Chinese say: *Even the ripest fruit does not drop into one's mouth*; and another Latin: Non volat in buccas assa columba tuas.

De male quæsitis non gaudet tertius hæres.
Ense cadunt multi, perimit sed crapula plures.
Fronte capillatâ post est Occasio calva.

Compare Bacon: 'Occasion turneth a bald noddle, after she hath presented her locks in front, and no hold taken.'

Furfure se miscens porcorum dentibus estur.

With a slight variation the Italian: Chi si fa fango, il porco lo calpesta.

Invidus haud eadem semper quatit ostia Dæmon.
Ipsa dies quandoque parens, quandoque noverca.
Irretit muscas, transmittit aranea vespas.
Mirari, non rimari, sapientia vera est.
Nomina si nescis, perit et cognitio rerum.
Non stillant omnes quas cernis in aëre nubes.

Non venit ad silvam, qui cuncta rubeta veretur.
Occurrit cuicunque Deus, paucique salutant.
Pro ratione Deus dispertit frigora vestis.
Quod rarum carum; vilescit quotidianum.
Regis ad exemplar totus componitur orbis.
Sermones blandi non radunt ora loquentis.
Stultorum calami carbones, mœnia chartæ.

So the French: Muraille blanche, papier des sots.

Add further these pentameters:

Conveniunt rebus nomina sæpe suis.
Dat Deus immiti cornua curta bovi.
Plus male facta nocent quam bene dicta docent.

Add further a few which occupy two lines:

Argue consultum, te diliget; argue stultum,
Avertet vultum, nec te dimittet inultum.

Balnea cornici non prosunt, nec meretrici;
Nec meretrix munda, nec cornix alba fit undâ.

Curia Romana non quærit ovem sine lanâ;
Dantes exaudit; non dantibus ostia claudit.

Dives eram dudum; fecerunt me tria nudum;
Alea, vina, Venus; tribus his sum factus egenus.

Omnia sunt nulla; rex, Papa, et plumbea bulla;
Cunctorum finis mors, vermis, fovea, cinis.

These lines are ascribed to Thomas à Kempis. There are seldom in monkish verses false quantities like the two which occur here close together.

Si bene barbatum faceret sua barba beatum,
Nullus in hoc circo queat esse beatior hirco.

Si doceas stultum, lætum non dat tibi vultum ;
Odit te multum ; vellet te scire sepultum.

Si quâ sede sedes, et sit tibi commoda sedes,
Illâ sede sede, nec ab illâ sede recede.

Hoc scio pro certo, quod si cum stercore certo,
Vinco seu vincor, semper ego maculor.

Multum deliro, si cuique placere requiro ;
Omnia qui potuit, hâc sine dote fuit.

Permutant mores homines, cum dantur honores ;
Corde stat inflato pauper, honore dato.

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